Yes - Men get Breast Cancer too

Service:
Breast Care

Exceptional healthcare, personally delivered
Yes, Men get Breast Cancer too
Introduction

Breast cancer is a rare condition in men.

Here, at the Bristol Breast Care Centre, all staff understand the importance of providing information and support to everyone diagnosed with breast cancer. We assume that men do not have the same relationship with their breasts as women do. But we acknowledge that you are still coping with the diagnosis which is usually seen as a woman’s disease.

Prior to diagnosis, most men do not realise that breast cancer can affect them. So, initial feelings are commonly surprise, confusion and a sense of isolation. This is when the Specialist breast care nurses can offer the information and support that you and your family require and deserve.

We hope that you will find our information leaflet useful.

After reading through the literature, you may think of more questions. Please contact your breast care nurse who will be only too pleased to provide answers.

Once you have been diagnosed with breast cancer, your doctors will want to discuss your treatment options with you and prepare a treatment plan.

Before they are ready to do this they need to know as much as possible about the tumour. After its removal, a more detailed examination can be made of the whole lump. The tumour with surrounding tissue will be examined by the Pathologist and the resulting report will give the medical team valuable information about the type of cancer and its predicted development. This will help the doctors to recommend the best treatments for you.
Additional treatments for breast cancer

The treatment of breast cancer in men tends to be the same as that for women. Your age, general health, type of tumour and stage of disease are all factors towards the type of treatment you are offered.

Treatments include:

- Surgery, either alone, or in combination with:
  - Radiotherapy.
  - Hormone treatment.
  - Chemotherapy.

Discussing treatment options

Once the medical team has all the available information, they will be ready to consider the best options for you. You will be fully involved in making decisions about treatment. You should be aware that you do not have to be rushed into treatment. A few extra days to think about what you really want and a chance to discuss your options with your partner, friends or family will make no difference to the progress of the disease.

Questions you may want to ask

Why this particular treatment plan?
What are the alternatives?
What are the longterm implications for me?
Are there side effects? If so, what are they?

You should feel free to ask for as much information as you feel you need. The doctor or breast care nurse will be able to explain anything you do not understand.
How long will I be in hospital?
Depending on individual circumstances you will be able to go home later the same day or the following day.

Will I experience any pain after my operation?
People’s ability to cope with pain is variable, and any pain you do experience is usually well managed with regular tablets.

Will I have any drains?
Some patients will be discharged home with a wound drain, and be given advice of care of this prior to discharge.

Sensation of the arm
The nerve that runs between the breast area and arm is disturbed at the time of the operation. It becomes temporarily swollen and causes a change in sensation of the upper arm. This can last for up to four months. After which you may be left with a permanent small area of numbness. Sensations vary from individual to individual. These are commonly described as tingling, pins and needles, ‘toothache’, and numbness.

Seroma (fluid collection)
This fluid can occur shortly after the operation or after the drains are removed. The fluid is caused by the internal raw areas around the site where the breast cancer was removed. This is a similar effect as blister fluid. If this occurs, it may be removed using a needle and syringe, which will not usually be painful, as the area is numb.

Changes in emotions
The impact of of breast cancer diagnosis can lead to unexpected mood swings. This may be quite difficult to cope with but will gradually improve. One to one sessions with your breast care nurse will give you time to talk this through.
What will my stitches and dressings look like?

Your stitches are under the skin and soluble, so there is no need to have them removed. The wound is covered with a waterproof dressing which can be removed 7-10 days after your operation.
If you or the individual you are caring for need support reading this leaflet please ask a member of staff for advice.

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