

UNDERSTANDING EARLY BREAST CANCER

Early breast cancer (EBC) is cancer that is found in the breast and possibly nearby lymph nodes and has not spread to other parts of the body.¹ However, there are different types of EBC and your doctor will use the EBC type to help guide their approach to your treatment. Understanding your diagnosis and type of breast cancer can allow you to better understand treatment options.



HOW IS CANCER TYPE DETERMINED?

There are many factors your doctor will use to determine cancer type.

- Your doctor will receive a pathology report, which is written by a pathologist each time tissue is removed to check for cancer. It is important to work with your doctor to learn how to read and understand the report, as well as how it will be used to create your treatment plan.
- The most common type of breast cancer is called HR+, HER2-. That means the cancer has hormone receptors (HR) but does not have human epidermal growth factor receptor 2 (HER2-).



UNDERSTANDING RECURRENCE

Early breast cancer often responds well to treatment and does not return.² However, discussing your risk of recurrence with your care team is critical, as most people are at some risk. Your doctor may work with a team of other doctors to order additional tests on the tumor to determine the risk of recurrence.

There are tests that can be done on a tumor sample to diagnose your type of cancer. One test your doctor may recommend uses a tumor sample (removed during a biopsy or surgery) to profile cancer genes. Another test can help predict the risk of breast cancer recurrence and whether you would benefit from chemotherapy. It is designed for stage I or II, estrogen receptor positive (also known as ER+) breast cancer that has not spread to nearby lymph nodes. This test can also help predict the chance of breast cancer spread (or metastasis). Your doctor may use these results to help create your treatment plan.



WHAT FACTORS MAY INCREASE RISK OF RECURRENCE?

A combination of factors may increase the risk of cancer returning or spreading.^{3,4}

Risk factors include:

- Larger tumor size
- Higher tumor grade
- Later tumor stage
- Greater tumor spread
- More lymph nodes with cancer
- Signs, such as genetic markers, that the cancer is growing more quickly
- Higher activity of certain genes, or gene expression
- Certain receptors on tumor cells

Remember, assessing the risk of recurrence is not based on any single factor — rather, it's based on many factors that make up a whole picture. Talk with your doctor to better understand your diagnosis and available treatment options so that you can work together in creating a personalized care plan that meets your needs.



WHAT CAN I DO TO LOWER THE RISK OF RECURRENCE?

Talk to your healthcare provider to learn more about your diagnosis and the risk of breast cancer recurrence. Understanding the different characteristics of cancer early on may help you have more informed conversations with your doctor about treatment options.

You can do all the right things and the cancer could still come back. There are many aspects of cancer recurrence that scientists and researchers are still studying.



REFERENCES

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