

Advice following your breast cancer treatment

This leaflet provides further information for individuals treated for breast cancer. It contains advice on signs and symptoms to look out for, and advice on follow-up scans.

Signs and symptoms to look out for

- 1) A new lump or swelling in the breast, in the skin after a mastectomy, above the collar bone, in the neck, or under the arm.
- 2) Any new skin changes, red areas or raised spots on the breast or mastectomy scar.
- 3) Nipple discharge.
- 4) Development of lymphoedema (new onset arm or breast swelling).
- 5) Any new, on-going pain in any part of the body, especially in the back or hips, that does not improve with painkillers and which is often worse at night. Pain in the same breast or armpit is not unusual after breast cancer treatment and is rarely worrying.
- 6) Pins & needles and/or a loss of sensation or weakness in the arms or legs.
- 7) Unexplained weight loss and a loss of appetite.
- 8) A constant feeling of nausea.
- 9) Discomfort or swelling under the ribs or across the upper abdomen.
- 10) A dry cough or a feeling of breathlessness.
- 11) Severe headaches – usually worse in the morning.

Mammograms

Most women diagnosed with breast cancer will have mammograms every year for five years after diagnosis. After that, if your mammograms are clear you will be invited for mammograms every three years under the NHS Breast Screening Programme.

These invitations will continue automatically until the age of 73, but you are welcome to request a mammogram every three years after this age by contacting NHS Breast Screening Programme on 0118 322 8282.

If you were 45 or younger when you were diagnosed with breast cancer your annual mammograms will continue until you reach the age of 50.

If you have had both breasts removed or if you are male, you do not require any mammograms.

If you are having annual mammograms at the Royal Berkshire Hospital, then you do not need to attend the NHS Breast Screening Programme appointments at the same time. The date of your next mammogram will be documented in your individualised treatment summary letter.

For those having mammograms at the Royal Berkshire Hospital, you should receive a letter with the result of your mammogram within 4-6 weeks of the mammogram being carried out. For any queries, please contact the Breast Cancer Clinical Nurse Specialists on 0118 322 7420 or email BreastCareNurses@royalberkshire.nhs.uk.

DEXA bone density scans

Bone density can be affected by several factors, such as increasing age or taking long-term medication such as Aromatase Inhibitors (AIs). This can lead to an increased risk of bone fractures; therefore, you may be offered a scan for assessment of your bone density, and treatment if required.

If you are on tamoxifen or no endocrine treatment at all, then you do not need a DEXA scan as part of your breast cancer treatment plan.

If you are taking an AI, then it is likely that you will have received a DEXA scan when you started the AI tablets. Please see your individualised treatment summary letter for further information regarding the result, and any need for future DEXA scans. If you have a DEXA scan in the future, these results will be communicated to you by letter, usually within a few weeks of your DEXA scan. If you have any questions regarding DEXA scans, please contact us on 0118 322 7420.

For more information about the Trust visit our website www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

This document can be made available in other languages and formats upon request.

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