

Integrated Care in Bermuda: Understanding Breast Health

A guide for people seeking to understand breast health and care in Bermuda



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Foreword

I am very pleased to introduce this document, bringing together an immense amount of work by many individuals and groups with the goal of improving the patient breast cancer pathway.

I hope with this document that people interested in the prevention of breast cancer, how it is diagnosed and treated, as well as the support available in Bermuda take time to read this information.

This document is reflective of a new way of planning and improving services that integrates patient experiences and involves patients in the planning of services alongside the many different healthcare providers, support services and charities who all play a part in the care and support of patients with breast cancer.

The goal of this process is to develop a truly integrated breast cancer pathway that educates about prevention, and supports the holistic experience of patients who have a breast cancer diagnosis as they go through treatment and gives every patient the best possible outcome.

Breast cancer is the leading cancer for women in Bermuda, and although women are much more likely to have a breast cancer diagnosis, men in Bermuda are diagnosed with it too. For this reason, breast cancer was the first pathway to be worked on.

I look forward to other cancer pathways being worked on in a similar way. The benefit to our community is that we can raise awareness about prevention, as well as ensure our cancer care is truly integrated around patients to improve their experience and outcomes.

The Hon. Kim N. Wilson, JP, MP
Minister of Health



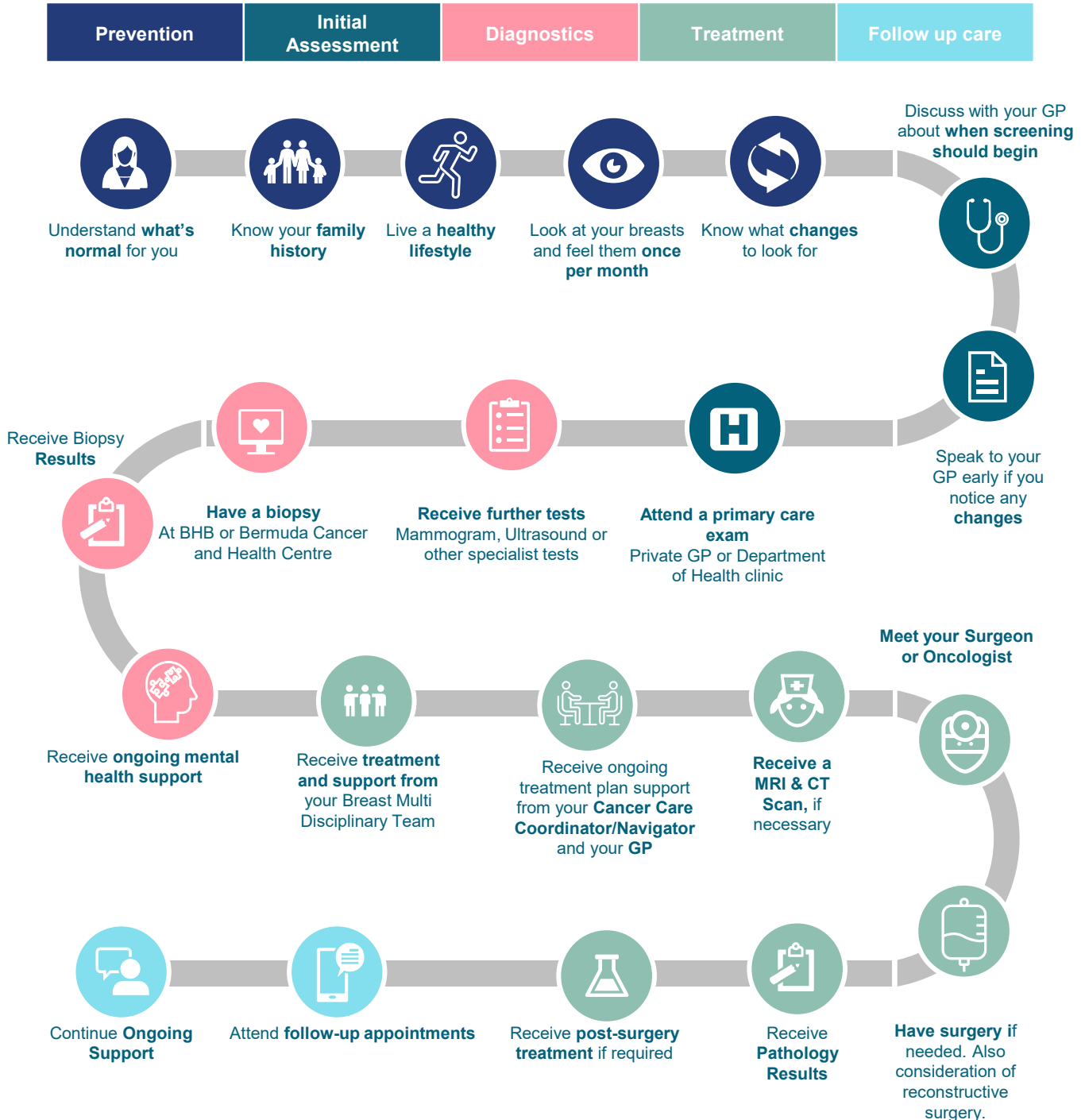
GOVERNMENT OF BERMUDA
Ministry of Health





Prevention, Treatment & Support Steps

You may find that your journey needs are different from someone else's. To give you an idea of what to expect, we have included an example journey below. You don't need to read this booklet in one go, so feel free to go at your own pace. You might feel overwhelmed along your journey but there are counselling services in Bermuda, we have included contact details for some of the support available on page 18.





Breast Health

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How can I take care of my breasts?

Knowing what is normal for you is the first step to looking after your breasts and makes it easier to notice any changes.

Your breasts may be different shapes or sizes, and as you move through life, your breasts may change.

- Women who have periods might notice changes in size throughout the month, and they might feel tender and lumpy just before your period.
- After menopause, you may notice your breasts feel softer, less firm and not lumpy.

These changes can happen because of hormones and may be nothing to worry about, but for this reason, it is important to get to know your breasts. Some women find it easiest to check in the bath or shower, or when getting dressed, but it is important to find the time to check once per month and for it to be somewhere you feel comfortable.

Breast check checklist:

01

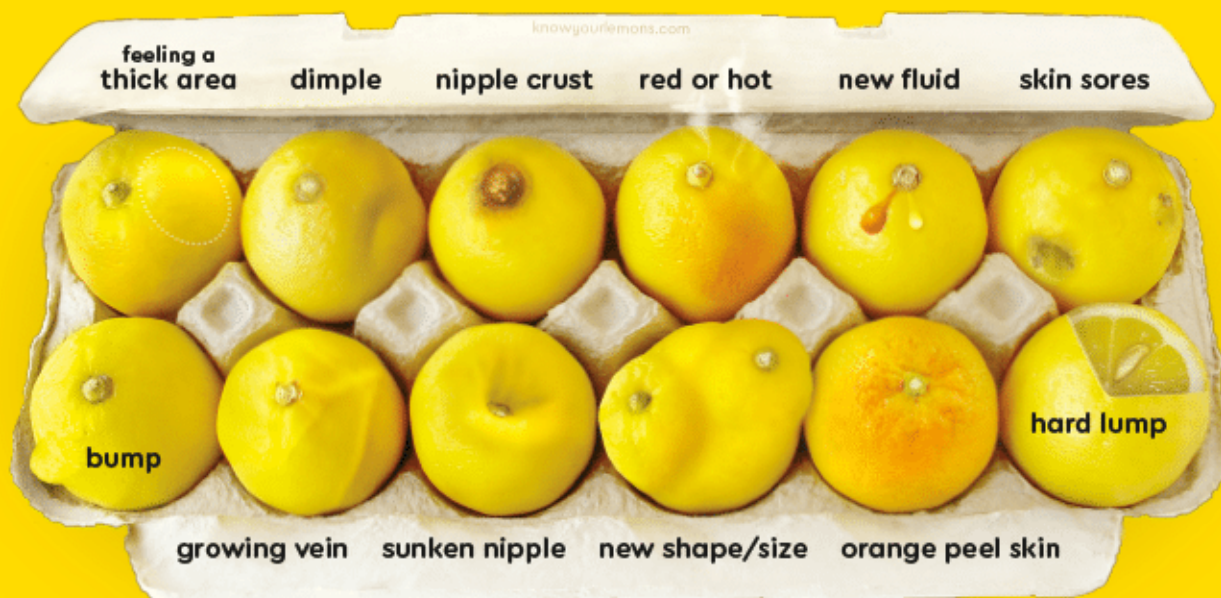
1. Check once per month and know your 'normal'

02

2. Make sure you look and feel

03

3. If you're concerned, get it checked out by your GP



12 signs of breast cancer to learn about: [knowyourlemons.com](https://www.knowyourlemons.com)



How often should I have my breasts screened?

It is important to remember that screening can detect breast cancer early, but it does not prevent you from getting breast cancer. Early detection can help to improve outcomes through identification of the cancer at an earlier stage.

Globally there are varying guidelines on the frequency at which you should receive screening, so it is important to speak to your GP about the appropriate frequency for you. Bermuda Cancer and Health Centre recommend screening once every year for those over 40 years of age.



Mammogram is always a good service which makes you feel you are in safe hands.

- Bermuda Breast Cancer Survivor





How can I reduce the risk of developing breast cancer?

Simply being a woman presents one of the greatest risks for developing breast cancer, though breast cancer does affect a small number of men each year. Other factors, some beyond your control and others within your control, may also affect your risk.

Diet and Lifestyle

Regular exercise and eating a healthy, balanced diet are recommended, as they can help prevent many health conditions, including heart disease, diabetes and many forms of cancer.

There is a link between reduced risk of breast cancer and those who:

- Maintain a healthy weight
- Exercise regularly
- Reduce alcohol intake
- Are able to breastfeed



But, even having taken all steps to reduce your risk, sometimes the development of cancer is just due to chance and factors beyond your control such as:

- Being over the age of 50
- Personal or family history of breast cancers
- History of radiation treatment
- Genetic predisposition for developing breast cancer
- Early menstruation or late menopause



Things to know if you are diagnosed

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How is breast cancer diagnosed?

Your GP may decide to do a physical exam and refer you for some tests to diagnose breast cancer. They may also refer you to a breast specialist or a surgeon.

All of the tests that you might expect can be done here in Bermuda and your GP or specialist will explain and support you to understand why the test is being performed.

Physical Examination

This is to check the appearance of your breasts. You may be asked to raise your arms over your head or let them hang by your sides, allowing your GP to look for differences in size or shape.

Mammogram

Suppose you find a lump or notice any changes you might be sent for a mammogram. This is a detailed X-ray of your breasts that will help to give a better look at anything suspicious.

Breast Ultrasound

This procedure will allow your doctor to take pictures of the inside of your breasts.

Breast MRI

An MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) is an imaging technique to create detailed images of areas inside the breast.

Biopsy

This is a test that removes tissue or fluid from the breast to be looked at under a microscope.

Further Tests

Your doctor may also request other tests, such as blood tests and bone scans.



How might a cancer diagnosis impact my mental health?

Your mental health can be affected at any time after a cancer diagnosis, including when your treatment has finished.

The support available from your cancer team and other on island groups can help you through.

It is normal to feel overwhelmed when you are newly diagnosed with cancer. Anxiety impacts more than 30% of those diagnosed. Some people become more emotional and feel a sense of losing control whilst also asking, 'why me?'

You might have worries about starting treatment, concerns for the future, how to tell your loved ones or how to pay for treatment. We will be there to support you and you can ask for mental health support anytime. You don't have to wait until things get too much.

Work and Money – some people diagnosed with cancer may find that their ability to work has been impacted, as well as their finances from unanticipated medical expenses.

- Consult your employer and/or a financial advisor to help bring you peace of mind.
- There is information on **page 17** to see how your treatment will be paid for

Relationships – It is especially important to have support from your friends, family and community during this time.

- Think about the information you feel comfortable sharing with your partner, family and friends and ensure that you communicate your journey openly and honestly (this can help to counteract some of the strain that a cancer diagnosis can cause to these relationships)
- It can help to discuss your feelings with those close to you or a professional (see support available on **page 18**)
- It is important to allow yourself time to adjust to what is happening and to do the same for those around you.



Where can I find mental health support?

In Bermuda there are lots of different types of mental health support and the level of support needed may vary from person to person. You can access support from many different sources.



Spending time with my family and friends helped me stay positive when dealing with my diagnosis and through treatment.”

- Bermuda Breast Cancer Survivor

Someone close to you – Sharing how you are feeling with your loved ones can be very beneficial and allow them to support you better.

Pastoral or spiritual support

Your GP –will know you well and provide you with reassurance. They will be able to signpost you to the most suitable support group.

Cancer care team – Speaking to your care team might be how you start the process of getting support. We know it isn't easy to start these conversations, but they will help signpost you to the support that you need.

Mid-Atlantic Wellness Institute (MWI) – The 24-hour helpline can be used if you are struggling and feel alone. Telephone: (441) 239-1111.

Charities and support groups – Organisations such as P.A.L.S., Just Between Us and Friends of Hospice can provide counselling and therapies to help you through this difficult time. We have included more details about these groups on page 18.





Which Health Professionals will be involved in my care?



My physician explained the process and put my mind at ease with the results. The **factual, detailed explanation** of my results helped me really understand my situation.”

- Bermuda Breast Cancer Survivor

Bermuda has a specific team of specialists that will meet to discuss your progress and the best treatment options for your situation. Every person’s journey is different and therefore may require different specialists. Your multidisciplinary team (MDT) may include:

- **A general practitioner (GP):** will assist you with your initial screening and diagnosis. They will also work together with your required specialists for your ongoing care.
- **A radiologist:** who specialises in x-rays and scans
- **A medical oncologist (cancer doctor):** who specialise in cancer treatments
- **A radiation oncologist (cancer doctor):** who specialise in cancer treatments
- **A breast surgeon:** who specialises in breast cancer surgery and may do reconstruction surgery
- **A specialist nurse:** who gives information, support and care delivery
- **A plastic surgeon:** who specialises in breast reconstruction
- **A pathologist:** who specialises in studying tissue samples and cells.

Your care team may also include other healthcare professionals and administrative support such as nurses, physiotherapist, psychologist, dietitian, social workers or counsellors and cancer pathway navigator.



What can I expect from my appointments?

You might be nervous or anxious before your first appointment after you have been diagnosed but it is important to know that you are in safe hands



Bringing a friend or family member to my appointments to take notes really helped me focus on what my physician was saying so that I didn't miss any important information"

- Bermuda Breast Cancer Survivor

During your appointments, your doctor will provide you with the information you need, help you understand your diagnosis and treatment and explain who else can provide you with support .

It may be difficult to remember everything that your doctor tells you in the appointment so, asking a friend or family member to accompany you and take notes can help you to take everything in.

The information that you receive in your appointments will cover:

- 1. Timelines** – You might feel a bit of uncertainty about when you will get your results or how long treatment will take. This can vary for each patient, but your doctor will keep you informed every step of the way.
- 2. Staging** – This is a common way of describing where the cancer is located, the size and any spread or growth. The stage and type of cancer you have will be individual to you, so your doctor will explain this to you.
- 3. Treatment** - The treatment you receive will depend on your stage and type of cancer. Your doctor will explain to you why you are receiving a certain treatment and how it will help treat or slow the growth of the cancer.
- 4. Side Effects** – Some people experience side effects from their treatment so it is good to be aware that this might happen. If you have any concerns, your doctor will discuss these with you and provide you with medicine or advice to help reduce these.



What treatment might I receive?

Each person's treatment journey will be different and treatment options are dependent on a variety of factors, including the staging and type of cancer that you have. Your doctor will discuss the treatment options with you and help you understand why you are receiving a certain one.

Breast-conserving surgery

Breast-conserving surgery (sometimes called a lumpectomy) removes cancer while leaving as much normal breast as possible.

Mastectomy

This is an operation to remove a breast tissue. This procedure may seem daunting but your surgeon and MDT team will provide you with the support to come to terms with it.

Radiotherapy

This is a treatment that uses high energy x-rays to kill the cancer cells and slow down how quickly they grow.

Chemotherapy

Chemotherapy for breast cancer uses drugs to target and destroy breast cancer cells. These drugs are usually injected directly into a vein through a needle or taken by mouth as pills.

Hormone therapy

Some types of breast cancer grow with hormones, like estrogen. Hormone therapy blocks these hormones, which keeps the cancer from growing.

Targeted therapy

Targeted cancer drugs for breast cancer are treatments that change the way cells work and help the body to control the growth of cancer.



Where will I be treated?

More treatment is provided on island than ever before with all standard breast cancer treatments being available. Cancer treatment in Bermuda is largely provided by BHB and Bermuda Cancer and Health Centre, with support from private providers and overseas colleagues



Such a relief to be able to have treatment in Bermuda, rather than abroad.”

- Bermuda Breast Cancer Survivor



King Edward VII Memorial Hospital

KEMH provides cancer screening, detection, surgery, chemotherapy services and palliative care services.



Bermuda Cancer and Health Centre

The Centre provides breast cancer screening and detection accredited by the Canadian Association of Radiologists, and radiation therapy services accredited by the American College of Radiology.



Other on-island providers

On-island surgeons, such as, Dr Thouet, Dr Dore and Dr Elliot, may be involved in your care. Charities such as PALS and Friends of Hospice can also provide such services along with emotional support and other counselling services.



Overseas care partners

The Centre has a radiation therapy alliance with Dana-Farber Brigham Cancer Centre, ranked 4th in the US for adult cancer care, and BHB has an established relationship with Johns Hopkins.

When will I have to go overseas?

All standard breast cancer treatments are available on island. You may need to obtain overseas treatment to receive a PET scan or for more complex treatment in some cases.



What happens after my treatment has finished?

Care for people diagnosed with breast cancer does not end when active treatment has finished. Your health care team will continue to check that the cancer has not come back, manage any side effects and monitor your overall health. **This is called follow-up care.**

BHB, the Centre and PALS work closely with your GP to arrange a personalized follow-up for you. Doctors want to keep track of your recovery in the months and years ahead. This is often referred to as surveillance or monitoring and may include:

- regular physical examinations and/or
- medical tests
- annual mammography

Looking after yourself

After your treatment has finished, the risk factors described earlier that are within your control are important to maintain.





How do I pay for my treatment?

Regardless of your insurance coverage, you will be able to receive treatment. It is important that you do not delay screening or cancer treatment.

It is always advisable to check what support is available to you from your health insurer to ensure you have all of the information required to make an informed decision and choice of treatment. If you are uninsured, support is available as outlined below.

What is the Standard Health Benefit?

Standard Health Benefit (“SHB”) is the base package of government-mandated health benefits in Bermuda. As part of the Standard Health Benefit you will find that most of the care and treatment required throughout your breast cancer journey is covered. To find out more about Standard Health Benefit, please refer to the Bermuda Health Council website.

If you have insurance...

The first step to take after diagnosis is speaking to your insurance provider about the extent of your coverage. If your treatment choice does not appear in the list below, please discuss it with your insurance provider for clarity on what is covered.

Government funded insurance is also available to those that may need it:

- **HIP** has 40% copay for overseas curative treatment (Tier 1) and the patient covers 100% cost of travel and accommodation for treatment that is available in Bermuda.
- **Futurecare** has 25% copay for overseas treatment (Tier 1) and the patient covers 100% cost of travel and accommodation for treatment that is available in Bermuda.

If you don't have insurance...

Bermuda Cancer and Health Centre is a registered charity and will waive the co-pay for clinical services including, mammography, ultrasound, breast biopsies and radiation therapy for those who cannot afford it. Support can also be sought through the Centre's 'equal access fund'. The fund helps to subsidise the cost of services at the Centre, making early detection and treatment available for everyone.

BHB's finance office can be contacted to discuss financial assistance options, (441) 239-1683, and medical social workers (MSW), (441) 239-1453.

PALS does not charge patients or their families for their services. PALS also can provide financial assistance for travel expenses associated with overseas medical treatment.

The Lady Cubitt Compassionate Association assists Bermudians in need financially by providing help with utility and other bills including prescription drugs, and help with children with special needs. The LCCA can also assist patients in financial need who must be sent overseas for medical and surgical treatments not available in Bermuda.



What support is available for me?



P.A.L.S. – Assists cancer patients at any stage of their diagnosis by collaborating with healthcare providers, and advocating on their behalf. They also provide emotional support and counseling services through full-time medical social workers and community partners.

- Telephone: (441) 236-PALS (7257)

- Website: <https://pals.bm/>



Friends of Hospice – Provides programmes and support including a day hospice, bereavement support and complementary therapies.

- Telephone: (441) 232-0859

- Website: <https://friendsofhospice.bm/>



Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) – A consortium of public and private sector employers who bring counselling and support services. Check with your employer if they are a member.

- Telephone: (441) 236-1815

- Website: [EAP](#)



The Lady Cubitt Compassionate Association - The LCCA assists Bermudians in need both financially and emotionally.

- Telephone: (441) 292 1132

Just Between Us – Provides a safe, local community support group where women over the age of 18 can swap stories about breast and other forms of cancer.

- Telephone: (441) 332-7274



Reach for Recovery Bras and Breast Prosthesis – Provides a safe international breast cancer support group to help women with breast cancer in their return to daily life. Although originally formed in New Zealand they operate a local branch here in Bermuda.

- Telephone: (441) 292-4810

- Website: <https://www.reach4recovery.org.za/>

Mid-Atlantic Wellness Institute (MWI) – The 24-hour Mental Health Crisis line is available to help those who are struggling and need emotional support.

- Telephone: (441) 239-1111



Questions to ask your doctor

A breast cancer diagnosis can come as a big shock. It can be difficult to know where to start, the questions below can be used as a starting point for a conversation with your doctor. Your doctor will be able to provide advice tailored to your circumstances, keeping in mind your medical history.

Diagnosis:

- What type of breast cancer do I have?

- Has the cancer spread? If so, where has it spread? How fast is it growing?

- Are there specific clinical guidelines for this type of cancer?

- Can I bring a family member with me to my appointments?

- Can you write down what you have told me so that I can read it later?

- Can I have a copy of my pathology report and can you explain it to me?

- I'm thinking of getting a second opinion. Can you recommend anyone?

- How will you be working with my GP and the multidisciplinary team?



Questions to ask your doctor

Treatment:

- Who is my treatment team? Who is my main contact person throughout my treatment?

- What treatment plan do you recommend? Are there other treatment choices for me?

- If I don't have the treatment, what should I expect?

- How long do I have to make a decision?

- How often will I need follow-up tests? What will my follow-up tests involve?

- How long will treatment take? Will I have to stay in hospital?

- Are there any out-of-pocket expenses not covered by my insurance?

- How will we know if the treatment is working?

- Are there any clinical trials or research studies I could join?

- Can I work, drive and do my normal activities while having treatment?



Giving back

Bermuda Hospitals Board (BHB) – Oncology Department

- Patients can receive chemotherapy treatment and meet with their oncology specialist and nurses. Tumour board confers about every patient to evaluate your condition and potential treatment options. The Oncology team works with your family physician, director of palliative care, PALS and overseas treatment facilities to ensure you receive the best possible care and support.
- Donations are graciously accepted here for BHB through Bermuda Hospitals Charitable Foundation (BHCF) : <https://bhcf.bm/give/donate-now.html>

Bermuda Cancer and Health Centre

- The Centre is a registered charity engaged in the prevention, detection, treatment and support of cancer and other health concerns in the local community.
- Through community support they are able to provide their services free of co-pay, regardless of whether you have health insurance.
- Donations are graciously accepted here: <https://www.cancer.bm/donation-home-page>

PALS

- They never charge patients or their families for the services they provide.
- They are not government-funded and instead rely solely on fundraising activities and donations
- Donations are graciously accepted here: <https://pals.bm/donate-now>

Friends of Hospice

- Donations are graciously accepted here: [Make a Donation | Friends of Hospice](#)

Reach for Recovery Bras and Breast Prosthesis

- Donations are graciously accepted here : [Donate - Reach For Recovery](#)

The Lady Cubitt Compassionate Association

- Donations are graciously accepted here : [Donate – LCCA – The Lady Cubitt Compassionate Association](#)



I had confidence in the people... the Centre ladies were lovely and my experience was seamless.



Glossary

Benign tumour – a growth that is not cancer. It does not invade nearby tissue or spread to other parts of the body.

Biopsy – an examination of tissue removed from a living body to discover the presence, cause or extent of a disease.

Carcinoma – cancer that forms in epithelial tissue. Epithelial tissue lines most of your organs, the internal passageways (like the oesophagus) and your skin.

CT – computed tomography scan is a medical imaging technique used to obtain detailed images of the body.

Diagnosis – the identification of the nature of an illness or other problem by examination of the symptoms.

Genetic predisposition – an increased likelihood of developing a particular disease based on the presence of one or more genetic variants and/or a family history.

In situ – in the original place.

Lobules – a small lobe or subdivision of a lobe.

Lymph nodes – lymph nodes are small structures in the body that work as filters for foreign substances, such as cancer.

Lymphatic system – the network of vessels through which lymph drains from the tissues to the blood.

Lymphedema – swelling due to build up of lymph fluid in the body.

Malignant – cells that grow uncontrollably and spread locally and/or to distant sites.

MDT – multi-disciplinary team.

Mammogram – an x-ray of the breast.

Mastectomy – surgery to remove part or all of the breast.

Menopause – the time of life when a woman's ovaries stop producing hormones and menstrual periods stop.

Metastases – the spread of cancer cells from the place where they were first formed to another part of the body.

MRI – magnetic resonance imaging is a medical imaging technique that uses a magnetic field and computer-generated radio waves to create detailed images of the organs and tissues in your body.

Mutation – the change in the DNA sequence of an organism.

Oestrogen – a category of sex hormones responsible for the development and regulation of the female reproductive system.

Radiation treatment – the use of high energy radiation from x-rays, gamma rays, neutrons, protons, and other sources to kill cancer cells and shrink tumours.

SHB – standard health benefit.

Staging – describes the size of a tumour and whether it has spread from its original location.

Stage 1 – when the cancer is 2cm or smaller. Very small numbers of the cancer cells may have reached the lymph nodes in the armpit.

Stage 2 – when the cancer is 5cm in size or larger. The cancer might have spread to the lymph nodes in the armpit. Sometimes the cancer has spread to 1 to 3 lymph nodes but cannot be found in the breast tissue.

Stage 3 – when the cancer has spread to nearby lymph nodes and sometimes to the skin of the breast or chest muscles. The cancer might only be small but can be found in 4 to 9 lymph nodes. Sometimes referred to as locally advanced cancer.

Stage 4 – secondary or metastatic breast cancer, meaning the cancer has spread to other parts of the body.

Tumour – an abnormal mass of tissue that forms when cells grow and divide more than they should.

Ultrasound – a procedure that uses high-energy sound waves to look at the tissues and organs inside of the body.



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About Integrated Care in Bermuda

What is integrated care and how can it help?

Integrated care enables Bermuda to better deliver more patient-centric care that prioritises access, efficiency and quality. This includes not just having clinics working together out in the community, but more integrated care pathways for patients within BHB services and in collaboration and partnership with the wider healthcare system.

What are Integrated Cancer Care Pathways (ICCPs)?

ICCPs are part of the BHB-wide Integration programme, launched in January 2021. The objective of the ICCPs is to design a more integrated service model through collaborative development of cancer patient pathways, with the aim to improve access to care, patient experience, clinical outcomes and operational performance. ICCPs are developed through engagement with a range of stakeholders and service providers across the pathway with a focus on speaking with patients to understand their journey identifying where things go well in this and what could be improved. The four cancer ICCPs which have been completed to date are: breast, colorectal, prostate and acute oncology.

Why was breast health selected to be an ICCP?

The breast cancer pathway was selected as the first ICCP, as breast cancer is the number one cancer affecting women in Bermuda. The work on the breast cancer pathway has been led by the Medical Director of Bermuda Cancer and Health Centre, Dr Chris Fosker, in collaboration with Bermuda Hospitals Board Executive Sponsors - Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Scott Pearman. Dr Anna Neilson-Williams has been the clinical lead for integration work at BHB. This team is supported by engagement with BHB colleagues, service providers, patients and external stakeholders.

What improvements have been seen so far?

Various stakeholders were engaged throughout the development of the pathway including 21 patients and 35 clinical colleagues, such as oncologists, surgeons and radiologists and since the launch of the ICCP, notable improvements have been seen in cancer care in Bermuda. There has been a reduction in wait times through the Recently Diagnosed Rapid Clinic and outcomes and collaboration have improved through the implementation of a specific multi-disciplinary team who review breast cancer cases. The recruitment of a cancer coordinator has enhanced integration between BHB and Bermuda Cancer and Health Centre, supporting improved navigation of the pathway for clinicians and patients.

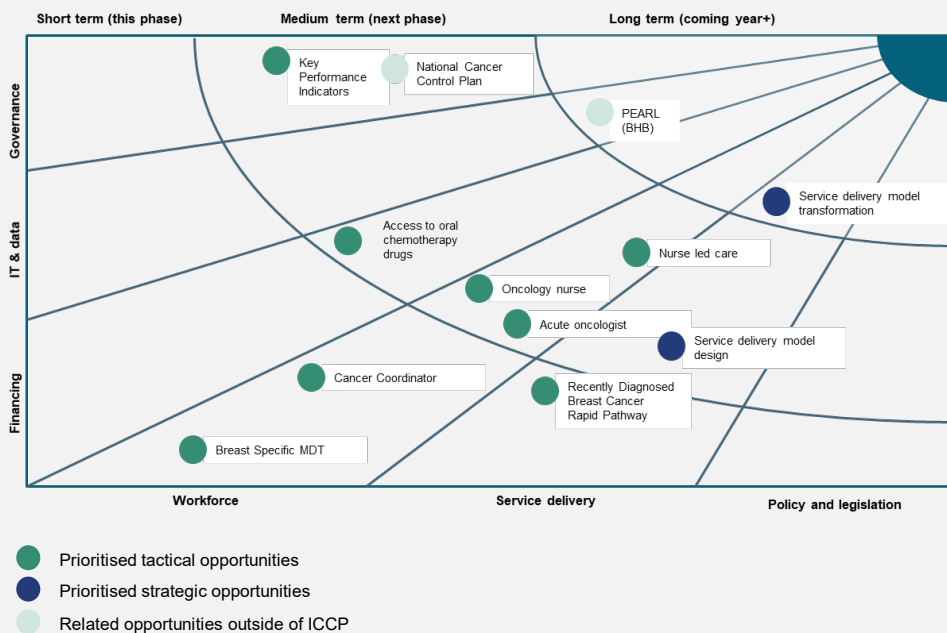
About Integrated Care in Bermuda

What are our next steps?

While there have been many positive changes, there are still opportunities to improve care further. The ICCP will have a continued focus on advancing the Recently Diagnosed Rapid Clinic and Rapid Diagnostic pathway, further accelerating care and reducing waiting times to be seen. In addition to the work of the ICCP, the National Cancer Control Plan will also be launching shortly. We look forward to keeping the community updated as we make improvements.

What we have achieved and what more is still to happen?

The diagram below highlights some of the work that has already happened in the short term, whilst also looking forward to steps and improvements that we are hoping to implement in the coming years.



If you would like to find out more details about the breast cancer patient journey or pathway map, please follow the links below to view in more detail.



[Breast Cancer Journey Map](#)



[Breast Cancer Service Map](#)



About this document

This booklet is a follow-on from the Integrated Cancer Care Pathways (ICCP), which aims to integrate and provide more patient-centric care. In developing the breast cancer pathway and creation of this document we have involved over 25 Bermuda cancer patients along with multiple clinical professionals and island support groups.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the patients, community members and service providers who have helped and contributed in the production of this document.

A note to the reader

This resource is not intended to replace other general health guides or cancer manuals: it is designed to complement them, giving a Bermuda-centric perspective on breast health and breast cancer. It will enhance Bermuda residents' decision-making process, provide information about risk factors and how these can be prevented and will also provide guidance on how to manage outcomes from treatments,

symptoms and general changes to their lifestyles as a result of breast cancer.

This booklet has been created as an introduction to Breast Health and you should continue to obtain independent advice from your doctor. There is continuing research and development into cancer diagnosis, treatments and prevention. Bermuda Hospitals Board and Bermuda Cancer and Health Centre exclude all liability for any adverse outcomes as a result of reliance on this booklet.

Feedback and next steps

We welcome feedback on this document. If you have any comments or further questions on this document, please contact Bermuda Hospitals Board, Public Relations on (441) 239-2104.



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Contact Us:

We'd love to hear from you! If you would like any further information about the Integrated Care in Bermuda: Understanding Breast Health or have any questions or concern, Please find our contact details listed here and reach out.

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Published by:

Bermuda Hospitals Board and Bermuda Cancer and Health (May 2023)

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Reference as: Bermuda Hospitals Board and Bermuda Cancer and Health (2023) Integrated Care in Bermuda: Understanding Breast Health