

10 Tips for Newly Diagnosed Breast Cancer Patients

See my *Breast Cancer Manual* for details

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1. Don't Panic

Breast cancer is NOT a medical emergency but it certainly is an emotional one. Take your time, gather the details of your diagnosis, seek whatever opinions you want and then make a treatment decision that is right for you.

2. Treat this diagnosis as a project and you're the "project manager"

By taking charge as the "project manager" you'll take control of the cancer rather than vice-versa. We'll do the "heavy work" for you but you need to make sure it gets done-you're your own best advocate.

3. Gather ALL of your information

Set up a folder or 3-ring binder with ALL of your information: breast imaging reports, lab results, pathology reports, etc. Bring this information to all of your initial physician consultations. Keep a notebook or journal and take notes at each consultation.

4. Don't be afraid of the Internet

The Internet is a great source of information but it can be overwhelming. Stick to the well-known and trusted sites.

5. Choose your physicians (Team) carefully

Caring for cancer takes a **Team**. You will have multiple oncologists: surgical (like myself), medical and radiation, radiologists, plastic surgeons, nursing, geneticists, etc. At Northwestern we are all affiliated with the Lynn Sage Breast Center, participate in a weekly multidisciplinary breast conference and all data, reports, and consultations are electronically shared via the electronic medical record.

6. Bring someone with you to the initial consultations

There will be a lot of new and unfamiliar information given to you at the initial consultation. You will be understandably anxious and a second pair (or more) of eyes and ears will help you remember and process all of the information later.

7. The consultation and treatment process will not always go smoothly

The treatment of cancer is complex, multidisciplinary and requires much coordination. While our goal is to make the process as efficient and streamlined as possible there will be glitches along the way. Have patience and if you think things are not moving as quickly or as smoothly as you think they should please let us know.

8. Don't keep your cancer diagnosis to yourself

It's been my experience that patients who try to keep their diagnosis a secret aren't successful for long. I recommend you share it with your closest friends and family as they may become upset if you don't. My *Breast Cancer Manual* has helpful hints for family and friends as they help you through this. Also, there are many support groups available in the community and through Northwestern that we can identify for you.

9. Everyone's cancer is unique and requires a unique treatment approach

You will receive many opinions and recommendations from family and friends. They mean well but they don't know the special circumstances of your diagnosis. Our goal is to develop a care plan that takes into account all of your special medical information as well as your lifestyle, etc and is one that you are comfortable with.

10. Review the *Breast Cancer Manual* and visit my website www.drbethke.com

Before your surgical oncology consultation with me please review the *Breast Cancer Manual*. It has the information I've referenced in this tip sheet and much more. My website also has more information, web links, videos, and pod casts. The more you know before the consultation the easier it'll be to make treatment decisions.