

## Breast services

# Support for people with secondary breast cancer

## Information for patients, relatives and carers

### Introduction

This leaflet aims to explain the nursing support available for patients with secondary breast cancer. If you have questions about anything in this leaflet, then please ask a member of your medical team.

### What is secondary breast cancer?

Secondary breast cancer occurs when breast cancer cells spread from the primary (first) cancer in the breast to other parts of the body. Breast cancer cells can spread to another part of the body through the lymphatic system or the bloodstream. Some people are diagnosed with primary and secondary breast cancer at the same time. You may also hear secondary breast cancer referred to as:

- metastatic breast cancer
- metastases
- advanced breast cancer
- secondary tumours
- secondaries
- stage 4 breast cancer

Secondary breast cancer can be treated but it cannot be cured. Treatment aims to control the cancer, relieve any symptoms and maintain your health, wellbeing and a good quality of life for as long as possible.

Coping with a diagnosis of secondary breast cancer can feel overwhelming. In the days or weeks after your diagnosis, you may find it hard to think clearly. You may experience many different emotions. However difficult it may seem you can have some control over how you manage the illness and deal with the emotional and practical issues it brings.

### How can the clinical nurse specialist help you?

Your clinical nurse specialist (CNS), sometimes called your key worker, provides information to help you and those close to you. They support you with understanding your diagnosis and treatment and signposting you to helpful support services.

They will liaise with other healthcare professionals such as your GP and can arrange referrals to specialist healthcare and support services. They can also signpost you to the appropriate services to assist you with financial advice and/or benefits claims.

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## How to contact your CNS

If you have questions or concerns, you can telephone the Macmillan cancer navigator service. (The service is open Monday to Friday 08:30 to 16.30 excluding bank holidays. The service is closed for training between 14.00- 14.45 on Thursdays. Call: 020 3313 0303.) If they are unable to answer your query immediately, they will take a message and book you into your CNS's telephone clinic. Your CNS will aim to call you back within 24 hours.

Your CNS will always try to be available for you when you come to the oncology clinic but, if they are busy and you do not have the time to wait, please telephone instead.

## Sharing your concerns

Everyone has different needs and concerns. Identifying and sharing them with your CNS is important as it means they can help you get the appropriate support you need.

A holistic needs assessment (HNA) checklist helps you to think about your needs and concerns across all areas of your life and find possible solutions. We will offer you an assessment around the time of your diagnosis. If your needs change, they can be reassessed using the HNA.

## Meeting others

### **Maggie's West London**

We provide a support group at Maggie's Cancer Centre at Charing Cross Hospital. This gives you the chance to meet others who understand what you are going through because they are going through it too. Please visit Maggie's or call them for more details.

Telephone: 020 7386 1750

### **Breast Cancer Now**

Breast Cancer Now also provide 'Living with Secondary Breast Cancer' sessions. Please call them for details.

Helpline: 0808 800 6000

For more information call your CNS.

## Useful telephone numbers

Hospital switchboard: 020 3311 1234

Acute oncology triage: 020 3311 5160 (24 hours)

**For urgent help or advice please contact the acute oncology triage service or visit your nearest A&E.**

## Further sources of support and information

### **Macmillan cancer navigator service at Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust**

This is a single point of contact for cancer patients at Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust, and their family, friends and carers. The service is here to help you to navigate your care and resolve queries that you may have. Our Navigators can access information about your appointments, connect you to appropriate services and signpost you on to further support. They

can also book you in for a telephone call back from your Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS) if you have a question that needs clinical input.

The service is open Monday to Friday 08:30 to 16.30 excluding bank holidays. (The service is closed for training between 14.00- 14.45 on Thursdays.)

Call: **020 3313 0303**

### **Macmillan cancer information and support service at Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust**

The Macmillan cancer information and support service offers free support and information to anyone affected by cancer, including family and loved ones. The service has physical centres at Charing Cross and Hammersmith Hospitals, and also offers virtual and telephone support.

When you call or visit you can speak to one of the Macmillan cancer team one-on-one about whatever matters most to you. You can sign up to a range of weekly virtual groups that provide the opportunity to connect with other people with cancer in a relaxed environment. You can also speak to our Macmillan welfare and benefits adviser, who can offer patients of the Trust tailored advice on additional financial support.

The service is open Monday-Thursday (excluding bank holidays), with various drop-ins available within our physical centres. For more information, please call us on **020 3313 5170** or email [imperial.macmillansupportservice@nhs.net](mailto:imperial.macmillansupportservice@nhs.net)

### **Maggie's West London**

Maggie's is a cancer charity that provides the emotional, practical and social support to people with cancer and their family and friends.

The centre offers a calming and beautiful space, a professional team of support staff, and the opportunity to talk and share with a community of people who have been through cancer too.

Maggie's centres are warm, friendly and informal places full of light and open space, with a big kitchen table at the heart of the building. Maggie's West London is located in the grounds of Charing Cross Hospital but is independent of our hospital.

The centre is open Monday to Friday, 09.00-17.00. For more information please call **020 7386 1750**.

### **Macmillan Support Line**

The Macmillan Support Line offers confidential support to people living with cancer and their loved ones. This support line is a national line provided by Macmillan and is independent of our hospital.

The Support Line is open every day, 08:00 to 20:00. Please call: **0808 808 000** or visit [www.macmillan.org.uk](http://www.macmillan.org.uk)

**How do I make a comment about my visit?**

~~We aim to provide the best possible service and staff will be happy to answer any of the~~ questions you may have. If you have any **suggestions** or **comments** about your visit, please either speak to a member of staff or contact the patient advice and liaison service (**PALS**) on **020 3313 0088** (Charing Cross, Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's & Chelsea hospitals), or **020 3312 7777** (St Mary's and Western Eye hospitals). You can also email PALS at [imperial.pals@nhs.net](mailto:imperial.pals@nhs.net) The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf.

Alternatively, you may wish to complain by contacting our complaints department:

Complaints department, fourth floor, Salton House, St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street  
London W2 1NY

Email: [ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net](mailto:ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net)

Telephone: **020 3312 1337 / 1349**

## Alternative formats

This leaflet can be provided on request in large print or easy read, as a sound recording, in Braille or in alternative languages. Please email the communications team:  
[imperial.communications@nhs.net](mailto:imperial.communications@nhs.net)

## Wi-fi

Wi-fi is available at our Trust. For more information visit our website: [www.imperial.nhs.uk](http://www.imperial.nhs.uk)

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