



CANCERcare®

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fact sheet

COPING WITH TRIPLE NEGATIVE BREAST CANCER

When you're diagnosed with triple negative breast cancer (TNBC), you may need help with practical tasks such as sorting through medical information or finding financial assistance for expenses, as well as with the emotional challenges of your diagnosis. Your health care team can assist you with many of these concerns. You can also take steps on your own to find the support you need. By learning about your options and reaching out to those who can help you, you will be better prepared to manage your diagnosis of TNBC.

WHAT IS TRIPLE NEGATIVE BREAST CANCER?

Forms of breast cancer are generally diagnosed based on the presence or absence of three "receptors" known to fuel most breast cancer tumors: estrogen, progesterone and human epidermal growth factor receptor 2 (HER2). A diagnosis of TNBC means that the tumor is estrogen receptor-negative, progesterone receptor-negative and HER2-negative. In other words, triple negative breast cancer tumors do not exhibit any of these three receptors.

Some drugs that work for hormone receptor-positive tumors are not effective for women with triple negative breast cancer. However, triple negative breast cancer often responds well to chemotherapy. Clinical trials are pointing the way to new and better treatments for triple negative breast cancer, especially for women with this type of cancer who also have a BRCA gene mutation.

TIPS FOR COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR HEALTH CARE TEAM

Write down questions as they arise. It is easy to get overwhelmed by treatment information from advertisements or websites. As questions come up, write them down. Then, at your next medical appointment, bring these questions with you so you can keep track of

what you need to know. The Triple Negative Breast Cancer Foundation offers a printout on their website titled, "Questions To Ask Your Medical Team" at www.tnbcfoundation.org.

Take notes. Ask a friend to accompany you to take notes at your appointments, or ask your doctor if you can record your visits to review them later. Write down the names of professionals and places you were referred to, and how to take any medications you were prescribed. The more information you have, the more empowered you will feel while meeting with your health care team.

Find someone on your team who can serve as your advocate. You should identify at least one person on your health care team whom you feel comfortable talking to. Your health care team includes nurses and social workers, as well as your primary care doctor and cancer specialist. Don't be afraid to ask them questions or bring up any concerns you have. Remember: you are a key member of the team.

SEEK EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

Join a support group. A support group connects you to other people coping with similar situations. CancerCare's face-to-face, telephone and online support groups are led by professional oncology social workers

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who specialize in helping people facing cancer. The Triple Negative Breast Cancer Foundation's online discussion forums offer 24/7 support, allowing women coping with triple negative breast cancer to learn from others who have faced this same diagnosis. Visit the forums at forum.tnbcfoundation.org.

Accept help. It can be hard to ask for or accept help. People with cancer often worry that they will be a burden to family or friends and overlook the fact that many family and friends often want to help. It may help if you break down your needs into categories, including practical ones that others can help you with. For example, do you need help with household chores, transportation to appointments or managing paperwork?

Take time for yourself. Take care of yourself by connecting with sources of strength, which can include activities like prayer, meditation or even taking a relaxing walk. Learn some deep-breathing and relaxation techniques to calm your mind and body. Take a long bath, or read a good book. Research shows that people with cancer who learn to manage stress and maintain a positive outlook often do better throughout their diagnosis and treatment.

MANAGING SIDE EFFECTS OF TREATMENT

Triple negative breast cancer is frequently treated with surgery, chemotherapy, radiation or a combination of the three. Learning to manage side effects often plays an important role in coping with this diagnosis. Some potential treatment side effects may include nausea and vomiting, dry skin and rash, pain, fatigue, lymphedema and hair loss.

Ask your doctor or oncology social worker about the kinds of side effects you might experience from your treatment. Your health care team can help you manage these treatment side effects. Develop a routine for managing each side effect and keep track of your progress. If you're prescribed any medications to manage side effects, remember to keep your dosing consistent and timely. Often, changing your diet, exercising regularly, taking pain-relieving medications and getting plenty of rest are helpful ways of coping with side effects from cancer treatment.

About The Triple Negative Breast Cancer Helpline®

The Triple Negative Breast Cancer Foundation® has partnered with CancerCare to offer free, professional support services to patients, families and health providers coping with a diagnosis of triple negative breast cancer. The TNBC Helpline is staffed by experienced oncology social workers with specific knowledge of triple negative disease. In addition to counseling, TNBC Helpline staff can assist callers in availing themselves of the various other services CancerCare has to offer including, where appropriate, helping patients apply for co-pay assistance, transportation and other social services. To speak to an expert social worker, call 877-880-TNBC (8622). You can also contact a social worker by email at TNBCHelpline@cancercare.org.

CancerCare® Can Help

Founded in 1944, CancerCare is the leading national organization providing free support services and information to help people manage the emotional, practical and financial challenges of cancer. Our comprehensive services include counseling and support groups over the phone, online and in-person, educational workshops, publications and financial and co-payment assistance. All CancerCare services are provided by professional oncology social workers and world-leading cancer experts.

To learn more, visit www.cancercare.org or call **800-813-HOPE (4673)**.

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