

Integrated Breast Cancer Care: FAQs



1 WHAT IS INTEGRATED CARE?

Integrated care involves the use of several different types of therapy together, to help the wellbeing of the person as a whole. This includes the main medical treatment (surgery, chemotherapy or radiotherapy) and also other aspects of life, such as nutrition, exercise or movement, massage, and relaxation techniques for example.



2 IF I DO THESE OTHER THINGS, CAN I AVOID THE DRUGS OR SURGERY?

No. These other aspects of care are to be used in addition to the treatment prescribed by your oncology team, not instead of them. However, adding in these extra things can help you feel better, recover from your treatment, and reduce the risk of recurrence of the cancer.



3 IS IT SAFE TO HAVE MASSAGE WHEN BEING TREATED FOR CANCER?

Yes, evidence shows that massage is safe to have when being treated for cancer and does not cause the cancer to spread. However, some aspects of massage will be adapted to ensure that it helps your body to heal, rather than interfering with the healing process, and it is important to go to someone who is qualified in oncology massage.



4 IF I HAVE MASSAGE, DOES IT NEED TO BE LIGHTER THAN USUAL?

Massage doesn't have to be lighter than usual, but massage therapists trained in oncology massage will give you massage that is appropriate for your body,

which will be most likely to help you cope with your symptoms.



5 MY TREATMENT IS MAKING ME SO TIRED, I DON'T HAVE THE ENERGY TO EXERCISE – CAN I JUST REST?

It is normal to feel tired, but you don't have to go and spend ages at the gym. Even if you don't feel like doing it, if you can do some movement or activity, even a gentle walk along a couple of blocks and back, you will feel better afterwards.



6 I HAVE LOST MY APPETITE BECAUSE OF MY TREATMENT, IS IT OK TO EAT WHAT I WANT?

Cancer treatment can cause changes in your sense of taste as well as nausea, which can make you feel less like eating. However, it is important that you have a good diet, and eat foods that contain a lot of nutrients, vitamins, protein and fibre. This will boost your immune system, help your body to recover and can reduce the risk of the cancer returning. It is important to avoid foods that have a high

sugar content, which will increase your levels of inflammation and have a negative effect on your immune system.



7 MY TREATMENT SEEMS TO MAKE ME GAIN WEIGHT, HOW CAN I PREVENT THIS?

If you find that you are gaining weight, it is important to eat a diet of foods that are low in sugar. Foods with a high sugar content will raise your insulin levels and make you gain more weight, as well as raising inflammation and having a negative effect on your immune system. Eating nutrient-rich foods will help to control your insulin levels and your weight. Having a good diet can make your treatment more effective and reduce the risk of the cancer returning.



8 LIVING WITH AND BEING TREATED FOR CANCER IS MAKING ME STRESSED, WORRIED AND DEPRESSED, HOW CAN I LIFT MY MOOD?

There are many things that you can do to help you feel more in control and give yourself the best chance of a good outcome: by eating a good diet and doing some physical activity, you will know that you are helping your body's immune system, reduce levels of inflammation, and reducing the chances of the cancer returning. In addition, other things that will boost your mood are massage, practising relaxation techniques (such as meditation or mindfulness, and deep-breathing exercises), having a laugh with a friend, getting outside in the sun, listening to music and good quality sleep.



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