

LIVING
with Hope

LET'S UNRAVEL mBC
WITH KNOWLEDGE!



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What is metastatic breast cancer?

Metastatic breast cancer (also called stage IV or advanced breast cancer) is not a specific type of breast cancer. It's the most advanced stage of breast cancer. It is breast cancer that has spread beyond the breast and nearby lymph nodes to other organs in the body (most often the bones, lungs, liver or brain).¹

Nearly 30% of women diagnosed with early-stage breast cancer will develop metastatic disease. Some people have metastatic breast cancer when they are first diagnosed with breast cancer.²



References:

1. Treatments for Metastatic Breast Cancer. Susan G. Komen [updated 2020 May 18; cited 2020 Jun 05]. Available from: <https://www.komen.org/breast-cancer/treatment/>. Accessed on July 2021.
2. Metastatic Breast Cancer. BreastCancerOrg [updated 2020 Jan 22; cited 2020 Jun 05]. Available from: https://www.breastcancer.org/symptoms/types/recur_metas. Accessed on July 2021.

Coming to terms with your diagnosis and taking the next step

Being diagnosed with metastatic breast cancer can be overwhelming. You may feel angry, scared, stressed, outraged, and depressed. There is no right or wrong way to come to terms with the diagnosis. You need to do and feel what is best for you and your situation. Keep in mind that metastatic disease is not hopeless. Many people continue to live long, productive lives with breast cancer in this stage. There are a wide variety of treatment options for metastatic breast cancer, and new medicines are being tested every day. More and more people are living life to the fullest while being treated for metastatic breast cancer. While metastatic breast cancer may not go away completely, treatment may control it for a number of years. If one treatment stops working, there usually is another you can try.¹



Reference:

1. Metastatic Breast Cancer. BreastCancerOrg [updated 2020 Jan 22; cited 2020 Jun 05]. Available from: https://www.breastcancer.org/symptoms/types/recur_metast. Accessed on July 2021.

Treatment options for metastatic breast cancer

With stage IV breast cancer, the goal of treatment is to slow the disease's growth for as long as possible, with the least amount of side effects or pain.¹

For women with stage IV breast cancer, below mentioned systemic therapies or combination of these are the main treatments:

Treatment armamentarium for metastatic breast cancer (adapted from Reference 1)



Treatment can often shrink tumors (or slow their growth), improve symptoms, and help women live longer. These cancers are considered incurable.²

References:

1. Life With Metastatic Breast Cancer. WebMD [uploaded 2020 Jan 28; cited 2020 Jun 05]. Available from: <https://www.webmd.com/breast-cancer/treatment-metastatic-breast-cancer#1>. Accessed on July 2021.
2. Treatment of Stage IV (Metastatic) Breast Cancer. American Cancer Society [updated 2020 Apr 21; cited 2020 Jun 05]. Available from: <https://www.cancer.org/cancer/breast-cancer/treatment/treatment-of-breast-cancer-by-stage/treatment-of-stage-iv—advanced-breast-cancer.html>. Accessed on July 2021.

Treatment options for metastatic breast cancer

Systemic drug therapies for metastatic breast cancer

A. Hormone therapy

Hormone therapy is usually the first treatment for hormone receptor-positive metastatic breast cancers. Hormone therapy drugs work by preventing the cancer cells from getting the estrogen they need to grow. For women, the choice of hormone therapy depends on menopausal status and any past hormone treatment for early breast cancer.

Some hormone therapy drugs (like tamoxifen and aromatase inhibitors) are pills. Others (like goserelin or fulvestrant) are given by injection.

At some point, even though it may be years away, hormone therapy almost always stops working. At this point, chemotherapy may be recommended.¹

Treatment options for metastatic breast cancer

B. Targeted therapies

Targeted therapies are treatments that target specific characteristics of cancer cells, such as a protein that allows the cancer cells to grow in a rapid or abnormal way. Targeted therapies are generally less likely than chemotherapy to harm normal, healthy cells.²

I. Drugs used in combination with hormone therapy

CDK4/6 inhibitors, mTOR inhibitors and PI3 kinase inhibitors are types of drugs used in combination with hormone therapy to treat some metastatic breast cancers.¹

II. Anti-HER2 therapies

Some breast cancer cells have high proportion of a protein called HER2 (human epidermal growth factor receptor type 2), which makes them more likely to grow and spread. Drugs that target this protein can help slow the growth of HER2-positive breast cancers.³

Treatment options for metastatic breast cancer

C. Chemotherapy

Chemotherapy is used to treat metastatic breast cancer by destroying or damaging the cancer cells as much as possible. Chemotherapy is often used in combination within its group or with targeted therapies.⁴

D. Immunotherapy

Immunotherapy is the use of medicines to stimulate a person's own immune system to recognize and destroy cancer cells more effectively. Immunotherapy can be used to treat some types of breast cancer.⁵

References:

1. Treatments for Metastatic Breast Cancer. Susan G. Komen [updated 2020 May 18; cited 2020 Jun 05]. Available from: <https://www.komen.org/breast-cancer/treatment/>. Accessed on July 2021.
2. Targeted Therapies to Treat Metastatic Breast Cancer. BreastCancer.Org [updated 2020 Jan 22; Cited 2020 Jun05]. Available from: https://www.breastcancer.org/symptoms/types/recur_metast/treat_metast/options/targeted. Accessed on July 2021.
3. Life With Metastatic Breast Cancer. WebMD [uploaded 2020 Jan 28; cited 2020 Jun 05]. Available from: <https://www.webmd.com/breast-cancer/treatments-metastatic-breast-cancer#1>. Accessed on July 2021.
4. Chemotherapy to Treat Metastatic Breast Cancer. BreastCancer.Org [updated 2019 Mar 23; cited 2020 Jun 05]. Available from: https://www.breastcancer.org/symptoms/types/recur_metast/treat_metast/options/chemo. Accessed on July 2021.
5. Immunotherapy for Breast Cancer. American Cancer Society [updated 2019 Sep 18; cited 2020 Jun 05]. Available from: <https://www.cancer.org/cancer/breast-cancer/treatment/immunotherapy.html>. Accessed on July 2021.

CDK (Cyclin Dependent Kinase) 4/6 inhibitors in metastatic breast cancer

CDK4 and CDK6 are enzymes important in cell division. CDK4/6 inhibitors are a class of drugs designed to interrupt the growth of cancer cells.¹

Certain cancers, for example, hormone receptor-positive breast cancer, are more likely to have disturbances in CDK4/6, and CDK 4/6 inhibitors may form part of the treatment protocol.² Most often, CDK4/6 inhibitors are given in combination with hormonal therapy (such as an aromatase inhibitor or fulvestrant).³

Research suggests CDK4/6 inhibitors may increase the time people have before cancer spreads and also help them live longer.¹

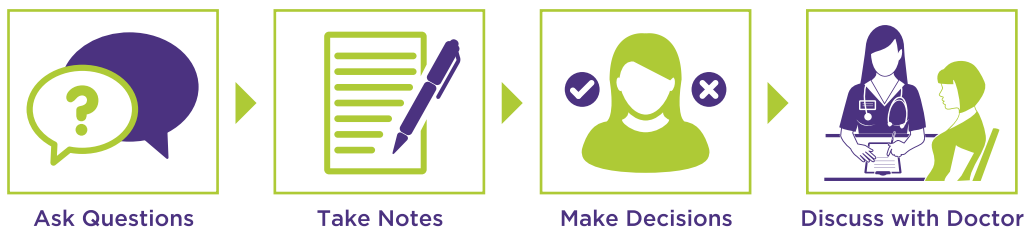
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1. Treatments for Metastatic Breast Cancer. Susan G. Komen [updated 2020 May 18; Cited 2020Jun 05]. Available from: <https://www.komen.org/breast-cancer/treatment/>. Accessed on July 2021.
2. Preusser M, De Mattos-Arruda L, Thill M, et al. CDK4/6 inhibitors in the treatment of patients with breast cancer: summary of a multidisciplinary round-table discussion [published correction appears in *ESMO Open*. 2019 Mar 11;4(2):e000368corr1]. *ESMO Open*. 2018;3(5):e000368.
3. Spring LM, Wander SA, Zangardi M, Bardia A. CDK 4/6 Inhibitors in Breast Cancer: Current Controversies and Future Directions. *Curr Oncol Rep*. 2019;21(3):25.

Treatment decision making: Take your time

There is time for you to get the information and attention you need to make decisions.

If you're in shock or feeling scared or angry, it can be hard to process what you hear when you're talking to your doctor the first time. Don't be afraid to ask questions.



Bring someone with you who can take notes. Take the time you need to make decisions. If you'd prefer to think about treatment options and then call your doctor with your decision, let your doctor know. Always reach out to your doctor if you need more information or are facing any challenge before or during therapy.¹

Reference:

1. Metastatic Breast Cancer Treatment and Planning. BreastCancerOrg [updated 2018 May 14; cited 2020 Jun 05]. Available from: https://www.breastcancer.org/symptoms/types/recur_metast/treat_metast. Accessed on July 2021.

Treatment decision making: Take your time

Questions to ask your doctor about treating metastatic breast cancer^{1,2}

1. What is the **goal of my treatment**?
2. What medicines will I be taking? What are the possible **side effects**?
3. Is this the **best available treatment** for my type of cancer?
4. What else do you think I need to know about the cancer?
5. I am worried about losing my **hair**, is there anything I can do to prevent this?
6. Will my treatment need **hospitalization**? Will I need an intravenous infusion?
7. How will you know **my treatment is working**?
8. What can I do to help myself deal with fatigue from the cancer or the treatment?

Treatment decision making: Take your time

Questions to ask your doctor about treating metastatic breast cancer^{1,2}

9. Will I be getting any **radiation** or **surgery**?
10. If I don't have **Cancer Insurance**, are there any **financial support options** for me?
11. How long do you think I will be able to continue working while receiving **treatment**?
12. Would you recommend any **support groups** that I can reach out who have gone through a similar experience?
13. Are there **counsellors** who could help me talk to my family?



References:

1. Metastatic Breast Cancer Treatment Choices. BreastCancerOrg [updated 2018 Mar 14; cited 2020 Jun 05]. Available from: https://www.breastcancer.org/symptoms/types/recur_metast/treat_metast/options. Accessed on July 2021.
2. Treatments for Metastatic Breast Cancer. Susan G. Komen [updated 2020 May 18; cited 2020 Jun 05]. Available from: <https://www.komen.org/breast-cancer/treatment/>. Accessed on July 2021.



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