

BREAST CANCER GLOSSARY

Axillary Node Dissection: The removal of the lymph nodes in the armpit to determine if cancer has spread beyond the breast tissue.

Benign: Not cancerous.

Biopsy: The removal of tissue for evaluation by a pathologist.

Chemotherapy: The use of anticancer drugs to destroy breast cancer cells or to prevent a cancer from spreading or recurring.

Complementary therapy; alternative therapy: Non-traditional therapies—including homeopathy, acupuncture, massage and creative visualization—sometimes used in addition to (or instead of) conventional medical therapies. Frequently used to help manage symptoms and side effects of treatment (such as nausea). Also known as Complementary Alternative Medicine (CAM) therapies, claims may/may not be documented with clinical evidence.

Diagnosis: The act of identifying a disease or condition.

Inflammatory breast cancer: A rare form of breast cancer that is often mistaken for a breast infection or dermatitis.

In situ cancer: Cancer that is not yet invasive, meaning it has not grown beyond its original site to invade healthy breast tissue. In situ means “in place.” Sometimes called a “precancer.”

Invasive cancer; infiltrating cancer: Breast cancer that has grown beyond its original site and is invading healthy breast tissue. The term invasive does not mean that the cancer has spread beyond the breast (metastasis).

Lumpectomy: The removal of the breast tumor, along with a border of normal tissue around it.

Lymph node: Part of the body’s defense system to fight infection and disease.

Lymphedema: The temporary or permanent swelling of a limb due to ineffective draining of the lymph nodes. A side effect of lymph node removal during breast cancer.

Malignant: Cancerous.

Mammogram: An X-ray image of the breast, used to diagnose a variety of breast conditions including cancer.

Mastectomy: The removal of the breast.

Metastasis: The spread of cancer to other parts of the body.

Paget’s disease: A rare form of breast cancer frequently misdiagnosed as dermatitis.

Prognosis: The anticipated outcome of a disease or condition.

Radiation treatment: The use of focused radioactive particles to target and destroy cancer cells.

Reconstruction: The surgical recreation of a breast using either tissue transferred from another location of the body or saline implants.

Recurrence: The reappearance of cancer after its complete disappearance. A recurrence of breast cancer is not the same thing as metastasis in which breast cancer spreads to another organ.

Second opinion: Another medical opinion used for a mammogram, pathology review or treatment plan.

Tumor: An abnormal growth, either benign or malignant.

Ultrasound: A technique that uses sound waves to study hard-to-reach body areas. Ultrasound is noninvasive, involves no radiation and avoids the possible hazards—such as bleeding, infection, or reactions to chemicals—of other diagnostic methods.

