Breast Cancer Interventions

Breast cancer or a malignant tumor found in the breast occurs predominantly in women, although men are also vulnerable. Early detection is key in diagnosing and treating breast cancer. Breast cancer treatment options include radiation therapy, chemotherapy, hormone therapy, surgical procedures such as a lumpectomy or a mastectomy, or a combination of several interventions. HER-2 and estrogen and progesterone receptor-positivity will determine which medications will be used in treatment.



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Radiation or Chemotherapy
Radiation-radio and Chemo-head-wrap
Radiation therapy and chemotherapy are used in addition to surgical procedures designed to remove the cancerous breast tumor(s). Radiation therapy involves applying radiation beams to the area affected by the breast cancer. Treatment typically occurs five times per week for five to seven weeks. Chemotherapy uses cytotoxic medications to kill cancerous cells. This type of therapy can be used prior to surgery to decrease the size of the tumor.

Hormonal Therapy
Harmonica Therapeutically-massaging
Hormone therapy can be used to treat breast cancers that are receptor-positive.

Tamoxifen
Tomahawks-fan
Receptor-positive breast cancers require estrogen to proliferate. Tamoxifen works as an estrogen antagonist, by blocking estrogen receptors in cancer cells, preventing further growth. Raloxifene, a selective estrogen receptor modulator (SERM), may also be used. This drug binds to estrogen receptors blocking estrogen activity.

Lumpectomy
Lump cut off by scalpel
A lumpectomy is a surgical procedure to remove a cancerous tumor, while also preserving the natural breast. While a lumpectomy may be desired for cosmetic reasons, this procedure may be contraindicated depending on the size and location of the tumor(s).

Mastectomy
Breast cut off by scalpel
A mastectomy is the surgical removal of one or both breasts. Postoperatively, the patient’s arm on the affected side(s) should be elevated to promote drainage of lymphatic fluid. The patient should also be monitored closely for bleeding.

Avoid BP and Injections Affected Arm
Avoid-sign BP & Syringes
Though evidence supporting this practice is weak, major breast cancer advocacy groups, like the National Cancer Institute and National Breast and Ovarian Cancer Centre, support blood pressure readings and intravenous procedures be performed on the unaffected side to prevent secondary lymphedema. This recommendation is to be used as a guideline for practice, and not a rule.

Hand Exercises
Hand Exercising
Performing low-intensity exercises, such as squeezing a ball, can help reduce swelling by facilitating drainage of lymph from the arm after a mastectomy. These exercises are also helpful in maintaining muscle tone and movement of the affected arm.

Considerations

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Grief Related to Body Image

Grief by Body Mirror-image

Changes in body image following a lumpectomy or mastectomy can elicit feelings of grief. Providing emotional support to patients is an important element of care and healing.

Prosthetics

Prosthetic breast

After undergoing a mastectomy, a patient may choose to have reconstructive surgery to restore the natural look and feel of the breast. Patients may instead choose to be fitted for a breast prosthesis. The prosthesis is typically in the pocket of a specially designed bra.

Reconstruction

Construction-worker Reconstructing

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Lymphedema

Lime-edamame

Accumulation of lymph fluid in the tissues, lymphedema, can occur after surgical removal of the axillary lymph nodes. Elevating the arm above the level of the heart can help to reduce accumulation of fluid.

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