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QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

ROCKINGHAM COMMUNITY COLLEGE



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What is cancer?

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Will I die if I get
breast cancer?

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Is it true that
breast cancer is
the leading cause
of cancer death
among women?

oooo

What risk
factors are most
important in
determining my
likelihood of
getting cancer?

oooo

I've found a lump
in my breast.
What should I
do now?

About

Breast Cancer

Third Edition



by

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Karl K. Boatman, MD

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100 Questions & Answers About Breast Cancer

Third Edition

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<i>Part 1: The Basics</i>	1
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- Will I die if I get breast cancer? Is it true that breast cancer is the leading cause of cancer death among women?
- What causes breast cancer? How do I determine whether I'm at risk?
- What are the different types of breast cancer? What is the difference between invasive and noninvasive cancers?

<i>Part 2: Risk Factors and Prevention</i>	15
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- What risk factors are most important in determining my likelihood of getting cancer?
- My breasts are always lumpy. Does this mean I have cancer or that I'm at a higher risk of getting cancer?
- How does estrogen relate to breast cancer? Can birth control pills or hormone replacement therapy put me at risk?

<i>Part 3: Diagnosis</i>	47
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- I've found a lump in my breast. What do I do now?
- How is a mammogram performed? Is it uncomfortable? Does it hurt?
- I don't have insurance, but my doctor wants me to have a mammogram to check out a suspicious lump. How can I get a mammogram if I can't afford one?

<i>Part 4: Treatment</i>	63
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- What should I do if it turns out I *do* have cancer?
- What options are available for the treatment of breast cancer?
- A friend suggested I get a second opinion. Should I?

Surgical Treatment

- What is a mastectomy and how does it differ from a lumpectomy? Why would I choose one over the other?
- How do I prepare for surgery? What can I expect after surgery, and how long will it take to recover?
- What are the options for breast reconstruction, and how do I know which one to choose? Does insurance cover it, or will I have to pay for breast reconstruction?

Radiation Treatment

- What is radiation therapy?
- Are there different kinds of radiation therapy?
- How do I prepare for radiation therapy and what happens when I receive it? What are the common side effects, and how do I deal with them?

Chemotherapy and Hormonal Therapy

- What is chemotherapy? How is hormonal therapy different?
- What are the drugs most commonly used to treat breast cancer? How do they compare to other treatments?
- I've heard dreadful stories about chemotherapy. What are some of the side effects, and how can they be alleviated?

Other Therapies

- I had a radical mastectomy years ago, and my doctor says I should take tamoxifen now. What is it? Are there any side effects with tamoxifen?
- What is meant by adjuvant therapy? Is it the same as alternative therapy?
- Are there alternative or herbal treatments for breast cancer and its side effects? Do they work?

Part 5: Coping with Treatment and Side Effects**151**

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- How can I relieve the pain associated with treatment?
 - What happens if the dose of pain medication I get isn't enough? Are pain drugs addictive?
 - What can I do to deal with hair loss?

Part 6: Changes Cancer Brings**175****Your Emotions**

- How do I get my life back to normal?
- Is it normal not to have mood swings when diagnosed, or will there be a delay in that response?
- Since my diagnosis of cancer, I'm not able to concentrate. Why is this happening? Is there anything I can do about it?

Your Body

- My body seems different now that I have cancer—I don't feel as attractive. What can I do to change this?
- Should I tell someone taking my blood pressure that I have had a mastectomy on that side?
- Does positive thinking have any power in the healing process? How do I motivate myself?

Your Family

- Why is it so difficult to tell friends and loved ones about my cancer diagnosis?
- What support system is available for my family?
- What do I tell a young child (especially a girl) who sees my mastectomy?

Part 7: The Impact of Cancer on Sexuality, Intimacy, and Fertility**199**

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- How do my partner and I “deal” with my mastectomy?
 - How does a breast cancer diagnosis and treatment impact intimacy and sexuality?
 - Are there any medicines available that increase the desire for sex or make it more enjoyable? Compared to conventional treatments, are alternative medicines better at preserving sexuality?

Part 8: Personal Relations**221**

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- I sometimes have conflicting feelings about wanting and needing calls from my friends, but I also crave having time alone. Why?
 - Sometimes I simply don't have the energy to socialize. What can I do to let my friends know that I still sometimes want to be included in special events?
 - How do I prepare my children, family, and friends for the place I'm in?

Appendix**227**

A list of Web sites, organizations, and literature to help breast cancer patients and their families find additional resources on general and specific topics related to breast cancer.

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