

How Women's College Hospital and The Peter Gilgan Centre for Women's Cancers are supporting breast cancer patients

# BREAST CANCER DURING COVID-19

## BREAST CONCERNS

The Breast Centre currently remains open to help you with breast concerns that have been identified during a self-examination, on imaging or through family history.

A referral can be made through your primary care provider (FAX 416-323-7730). As much as possible, appointments will be converted into telephone or virtual visits.

Our breast team, including GPOs (general practitioners in oncology), breast surgeons, genetic counsellors and a nurse practitioner are seeing patients that need a clinical appointment to help address new concerns and ensure follow-up of ongoing ones.

If a physical examination is needed, we will accommodate a clinical visit with patient and provider safety as a priority.

## BREAST IMAGING

If you have breast concerns that require timely investigation, our Breast Imaging department is currently open to you.

If you need a mammogram, ultrasound or MRI to help sort out a breast concern, you are still able to book a test at this time.

We are still performing breast biopsies to help with the diagnosis of breast cancer or other high risk breast lesions.

## BREAST CANCER TREATMENT

A variety of options exist for the treatment of breast cancer.

The main types of treatment include **surgery, radiation therapy and systemic treatment** (chemotherapy and hormone treatment).

Some patients may start with systemic treatments, others may begin with surgery. Your doctor will discuss the plan that is best for you.

**Surgical Oncology** – Some breast surgeries are going ahead, your surgeon would be best to advise on the timing of surgery for you.

**Radiation Oncology** – If you require radiation treatment, you will still be referred to radiation oncology.

**Medical Oncology** – You may be referred to medical oncology prior to surgery for an opportunity for pre-surgery chemotherapy or hormone therapy.

If you require genetic testing, our genetic counsellors are still taking appointments. However, your initial consult may be done over the phone.

Use the wait time before surgery or treatment to prepare your body and mind. Focus on exercise, nutrition, stress reduction, psychosocial support and smoking cessation.



## HOW TO COPE WITH ANXIETY & BREAST CANCER

1. You may be experiencing a wide range of emotions. Take the time to identify them and take a moment to tune into your body and notice how you are feeling. Often accepting the distress is the quickest way to feel calmer.
2. Focus on what is within your control, such as exercising, eating well, seeking and offering support. It may be helpful to create a list.
3. Practice tolerating the uncertainty. When we experience anxiety, it is usually related to a lack of control. Remind yourself that uncertainty is a part of life, but it will pass.
4. Challenge any negative automatic thoughts. Distinguish fact from fear.
5. Create a philosophy for how you are going to approach your breast cancer trajectory. For example, creating a mantra can help with frame of mind.
6. Build structure into your everyday routine. Include a combination of tasks and pleasures as both can provide a sense of purpose and a feeling of mastery.
7. Develop a Self-Care Plan. For example, document all of the activities that give you joy such as listening to music, journaling, taking a bath, etc.
8. If you are feeling low and do not feel like doing anything, try the opposite approach. Don't think - just do. Go outside for a walk.
9. Start a daily gratitude practice that focuses on what went well in the day. What are you grateful for? At the same time, start a daily breathing practice to help you relax.
10. Get all of the information you can about your breast cancer. This might mean reaching out to your healthcare team and reading information from reputable and credible sites like the Canadian Cancer Society.

## SUPPORT

Women's College Hospital patients are able to access professional support through the social worker, Emma Rinaldo (emma.rinaldo@wchospital.ca or 416.323.7330) and peer support specialist, Kate Mlodzik (myccssupport@wchospital.ca).

If you are a patient at another hospital, please contact your healthcare team and ask to be connected to a psychosocial provider.

For more information about The Peter Gilgan Centre for Women's Cancers, visit: [womenscollegehospital.ca/PeterGilganCentre](https://womenscollegehospital.ca/PeterGilganCentre)

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