



METASTATIC BREAST CANCER (MBC)

Q & A GUIDE



Early detection is the best protection. You can't change what you have but you can fight to survive. Be strong and fight!

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THIS Q & A GUIDE COVERS:

- What is Metastatic Breast Cancer?
- What is the difference between Metastatic Breast Cancer and Early Breast Cancer?
- How is Metastatic Breast Cancer diagnosed?
- What are the symptoms of Metastatic Breast Cancer?
- Where can Metastatic Breast Cancer spread to?
- What is the treatment for Metastatic Breast Cancer?
- How do I stay healthy while on treatment for Metastatic Breast Cancer?
- What is the prognosis for Metastatic Breast Cancer?
- How do I cope with living with Metastatic Breast Cancer?
- How do I care for a loved one living with Metastatic Breast Cancer?

Q: WHAT IS METASTATIC BREAST CANCER?

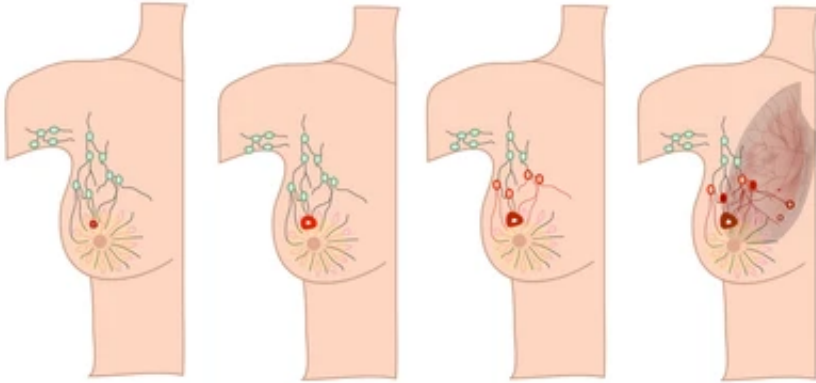
A: Breast cancer is a type of cancer that starts in the breast. It is the most common cancer in Nigeria. Breast cancer occurs in women although men can also have breast cancer. Some of the common symptoms and signs of breast cancer may include a lump in the breast, bloody discharge from the nipple and changes in the shape, size or texture of the nipple.

Metastatic Breast Cancer (also known as Stage 4) or advanced breast cancer is cancer that has spread beyond the breast and nearby lymph nodes to other parts of the body; most often the bones, lungs, liver or brain.

Cancer cells can break away from the original tumor in the breast and travel to other parts of the body through the bloodstream or the lymphatic system, which is a large network of nodes and vessels that works to remove bacteria, viruses, and cellular waste products.

Although metastatic breast cancer has spread to another part of the body, it is still breast cancer and treated as breast cancer.

Breast cancer can come back in another part of the body months or years after the original diagnosis and treatment. Some people have metastatic breast cancer when they are first diagnosed with breast cancer. This means that the cancer in the breast wasn't detected before it spread to another part of the body.



Q: WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN METASTATIC BREAST CANCER AND EARLY BREAST CANCER?

A: Breast cancer whether early stage or advanced is not a death sentence. Treatment options are available for every category.

Individuals with metastatic breast cancer have Stage 4 or advanced disease. This means the cancer has spread from the initial site (the breast) to distant sites of the body. These could be the lungs, liver, brain or bones.

Individuals with metastatic breast cancer may need to be on treatment for a longer period than those with early breast cancer. It is usually easier for doctors to treat early breast cancer than metastatic breast cancer.

Dealing with metastatic breast cancer presents many challenges; for the person diagnosed, their caregivers and the medical team. However, a good quality of life is possible for months or years for a person living with metastatic breast cancer.



Q: HOW IS METASTATIC BREAST CANCER DIAGNOSED?

A: Tests to diagnose Metastatic Breast Cancer include:

- Blood tests (including tumour markers in some patients)
- Whole-body bone scan, with or without X-rays of specific bones
- MRI of the spine or brain
- CT scan of the chest, abdomen, pelvis, and/or brain
- PET scan
- X-ray or ultrasound of the abdomen or chest
- Bronchoscopy, if you have a constant cough or trouble breathing
- Biopsy of any suspicious area

A "tap," removal of fluid from the area with symptoms to check for cancer cells; a pleural tap removes fluid between the lung and chest wall and a spinal tap removes fluid from around the spinal cord.

Q: WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF METASTATIC BREAST CANCER?

A: The symptoms of metastatic breast cancer can be very different depending on the location of the cancer. They may include:

- Constant back, bone, or joint pain
- Difficulty with urinating (either incontinence or not being able to go); this can be a sign that the nerves in your back are being pinched by a cancer
- Numbness or weakness anywhere in your body
- A constant dry cough
- Difficulty breathing
- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain
- Loss of appetite
- Abdominal bloating, pain, or tenderness
- Constant nausea, vomiting, or weight loss
- Jaundice (a yellow tinge to the skin and whites of your eyes)
- Severe headaches
- Vision problems (blurry vision, double vision, loss of vision)
- Seizures
- Loss of balance
- Confusion

Q: WHERE CAN METASTATIC BREAST CANCER SPREAD TO?

A: Metastatic cancer is a cancer that has spread from the part of the body where it started (the primary site) to other parts of the body. When cancer cells break away from a tumour, they can travel to other areas of the body through the bloodstream or the lymph system (a collection of vessels that carry fluid and immune system cells)

Cancer cells have to go through several steps to spread to new parts of the body:

- They have to be able to break away from the original tumour and enter the bloodstream or lymph system, which can carry them to another part of the body.
- They need to attach to the wall of a blood or lymph vessel and move through it into a new organ.
- They need to be able to grow and thrive in their new location.
- They need to be able to avoid attacks from the body's immune system.

Breast cancers most often metastasize to the liver, brain, bones, or lungs. This happens when breast cancer cells break off a breast tumour and move through the body in the bloodstream or lymph system.

BONE METASTASIS

The most common symptom of breast cancer that has spread to the bone is a sudden, noticeable new pain. Breast cancer can spread to any bone, but most often spreads to the ribs, spine, pelvis, or the long bones in the arms and legs.

LUNG METASTASIS

When breast cancer moves into the lung, it may cause symptoms which include pain or discomfort in the lung, shortness of breath, persistent cough and others.

BRAIN METASTASIS

Symptoms of breast cancer that has spread to the brain can include headache, changes in speech or vision, memory problems and others.

LIVER METASTASIS

Symptoms of breast cancer that has spread to the liver can include pain or discomfort in the mid-section, fatigue and weakness, weight loss or poor appetite, fever and others.

Q: WHAT IS THE TREATMENT FOR METASTATIC BREAST CANCER?

A: Treatments include many of the same treatments as other stages of breast cancer:

Chemotherapy

Radiation Therapy

Hormone Therapy

Biologic Targeted Therapy



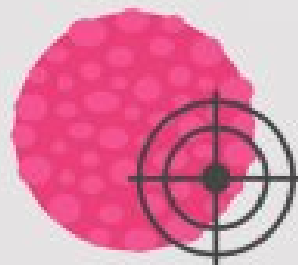
hormone therapy



radiation therapy



chemotherapy



targeted therapy

Q: HOW DO I STAY HEALTHY WHILE ON TREATMENT FOR METASTATIC BREAST CANCER?

A: Individuals with metastatic breast cancer are encouraged to follow established guidelines for good health, such as not smoking, no alcohol, eating well, and managing stress. In addition to this, it is important to have recommended medical checkups and tests to take care of your health. Regular physical activity can help with your strength and energy levels.



During treatment, your health care team will continue to check to make sure the cancer has not worsened, manage any side effects, and monitor your overall health. This may include regular physical examinations, blood tests, or imaging tests. The types of tests you receive depend on several factors including your current health and the types of treatment given.

Q: WHAT IS THE PROGNOSIS FOR METASTATIC BREAST CANCER?

A: While there is no cure for metastatic breast cancer, there are a wide variety of treatment options and new medicines are being tested every day that can extend an individual's life, while maintaining quality of life. There are also clinical trials available that offer hope.

Being diagnosed or living with metastatic breast cancer is not a hopeless situation.

Many people continue to live long productive lives with breast cancer in this stage.

Treatment may control it for a number of years. If one treatment stops working, there usually is another you can try. The cancer can be active sometimes and then go into remission at other times. Many different treatments — alone, in combination, or in sequence — are often used.

Q: HOW DO I COPE WITH LIVING WITH METASTATIC BREAST CANCER?

A: Living with metastatic cancer is challenging. Each person with metastatic breast cancer has individual concerns and challenges. With any challenge, a good first step is being able to recognize your fears and talk about them. Effective coping requires:

1. Understanding the challenge you are facing
2. Thinking through solutions
3. Asking for and allowing the support of others
4. Feeling comfortable with the course of action you choose
5. Take care of your body and mental health by; eating nutritious meals, avoiding smoking and vaping, drinking plenty of water, exercising which helps decrease depression and anxiety and improve moods and by getting enough sleep.
6. Surround yourself with good people: People with strong family or social connections are generally healthier than those who lack a support network. Make plans with supportive family members and friends.
7. Learn how to deal with stress. Practice good coping skills such as exercising, taking a nature walk, playing with your children or try journal writing as a stress reducer. Also, remember to smile and see the humour in life.
8. Try meditating and prayer. Relaxation exercises and prayer can improve your state of mind and outlook on life.
9. Get help when you need it.

Q: HOW DO I CARE FOR A LOVED ONE LIVING WITH METASTATIC BREAST CANCER?

A: Family members and friends often play an important role in taking care of a person with metastatic breast cancer. This is called being a caregiver. Caregivers can provide physical, practical, and emotional support to the patient, even if they live far away. Caregivers may have a range of responsibilities on a daily or as-needed basis, including:

Providing support and encouragement

Talking with the health care team

Giving medications

Helping manage symptoms and side effects

Coordinating medical appointments

Providing a ride to and from hospital appointments

Assisting with meals

Helping with household chores

Handling insurance and billing issues

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The information included in the publication was correct at the time of going to press. We plan to review publications after a year however updates may happen more frequently.

Whether you are recently diagnosed, or going through treatment or living with metastatic Breast Cancer or you are a caregiver,

We are HERE for you.

Call our **MobiPINK Breast Cancer Helpline** today and speak to someone who understands.

0809 4444 039

Contact us

www.mobipink.com.ng

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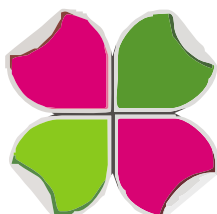
The MobiPINK Project
is an initiative of



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MobiPINK 
for MBC patients and those who care for them

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