

# ELEVATING YOUR BREAST CANCER CARE: TOOLS FOR TREATMENT DECISIONS & SELF-ADVOCACY

## Program Resource Guide

### Questions to Ask Following a Breast Cancer Diagnosis

- What is the disease stage, and has it spread?
- What is my breast cancer type, including hormone receptor status?
- What is the HER2 status of my tumor?
- Can we conserve my breasts, or do I need a mastectomy?
- What type of lymph node assessment do I need to have?
- What treatment options may be right for me?

#### Understanding HER2

- HER2 is a protein found on the surface of some cells that helps control how they grow.
- In certain breast cancers, the tumor cells make **too much HER2** (called **HER2-positive**), which can cause the cancer to grow more quickly.
- Other tumors are **HER2-negative**, meaning they don't overexpress this protein.

**Why It Matters:** HER2 status helps guide treatment. HER2-positive cancers often respond to targeted therapies.

#### What Is Hormone Receptor Status?

- **Hormone receptor-positive (ER+ and/or PR+):** Cancer cells use hormones to grow.
- **Hormone receptor-negative (ER-/PR-):** Cancer cells do not rely on these hormones.

**Why It Matters:** Hormone receptor status helps guide treatment decisions:

- **HR-positive cancers** often respond well to hormone (endocrine) therapy.
- **HR-negative cancers** don't benefit from hormone therapy.

### Glossary Terms

**Circulating Tumor DNA (ctDNA):** Small fragments of DNA shed by cancer cells into the bloodstream.

**Cyclin-Dependent Kinase (CDK) 4/6 Inhibitors:** A class of targeted cancer drugs that slow or stop the growth of cancer cells by blocking key proteins (CDK4 and CDK6) that control the cell cycle.

**Endoscopic Mastectomy:** A minimally invasive type of breast surgery in which the breast tissue is removed using an endoscope (a thin tube with a camera and light) inserted through small incisions, rather than a large open cut.

**Immunotherapy:** Type of therapy that harnesses one's own immune system to help the body fight cancer, infection, and other diseases.

**Triple-Negative Breast Cancer (TNBC):** A type of breast cancer in which the tumor cells lack three key receptors that commonly drive breast cancer growth: estrogen receptor (ER), progesterone receptor (PR), and HER2.

### Breast Cancer Resources

- [ABCD \(After Breast Cancer Diagnosis\)](#)
- [Cure](#)
- [PEN's Breast Cancer Programs](#)

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