



The TNBC Treatment Journey

Each patient's experience with triple-negative breast cancer is unique, and the way it's treated should be, too. Use this material to educate yourself for your own journey. You will learn about the stages of breast cancer and some common types of treatment. Your care team will help you to understand your options and answer any questions that may come up.

What is TNBC?

TNBC (or triple-negative breast cancer) is an aggressive type of breast cancer where cells lack estrogen receptors, progesterone receptors, and excess HER2 receptors. That is what makes it "triple-negative." Treatments that work for other types of breast cancer that have those receptors may not be an option for people with TNBC.

Who can get TNBC?

Anyone can get TNBC. However, it is more common in people who are younger than age 40, Black, or have certain gene mutations.

10%–15%

of people with breast cancer have TNBC

2X

Non-Hispanic Black women are about 2 times more likely than non-Hispanic white women to be diagnosed with TNBC

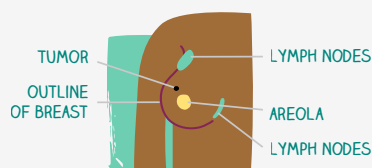
What are the stages of breast cancer?

There are four stages of invasive breast cancer. The word "stage" describes the size of the tumor in your breast and if it has spread to your lymph nodes and other parts of your body. Lymph nodes are small structures throughout your body that filter harmful substances and help fight infection and disease as part of your immune system. They are located in many parts of the body, including the neck, armpit, and chest.

Your health care team may recommend different treatments depending on the stage of your cancer.

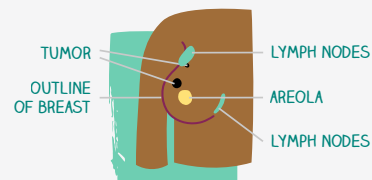
Stage 1

- The earliest stage of invasive breast cancer, meaning the cancer has grown or gotten into nearby or surrounding breast tissue
- The tumor is 2 cm or smaller



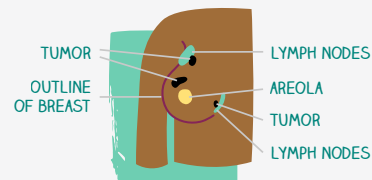
Stage 2

- The tumor may have started to grow up to 2-5 cm
- Cancer may or may not start to appear in the nearby lymph nodes



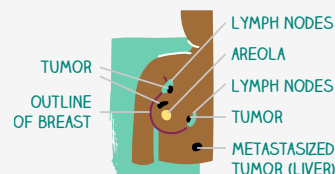
Stage 3

- Cancer has usually invaded nearby tissues and has likely spread to lymph nodes



Stage 4

- This stage means the cancer has spread beyond the breast and nearby lymph nodes to other distant parts of the body
- Also referred to as "metastatic" cancer



What are some treatment options for TNBC?

Treatment before surgery

You might hear your care team talk about **preoperative or neoadjuvant (NEE-oh-A-juh-vunt) treatment**, which means treatment before surgery. This type of treatment may be started soon after you are diagnosed with breast cancer, depending on the stage at the time of diagnosis. Talk to your doctor right away to understand this choice and the various options you may have.

Surgery

When you have breast cancer, surgery may be an option in certain situations. You and your care team should work together to decide which surgery is right for you based on: your preferences, your overall health and the type and stage of cancer you have.

Types of breast cancer surgery include:

Lumpectomy | A surgery to remove the tumor and some nearby tissue while leaving the healthy parts of the breast. A lumpectomy may be an option if the cancer has not spread. Most women may also need radiation therapy after getting a lumpectomy.

Mastectomy | A surgery to remove all or part of the breast, which may include removing some lymph nodes, some lining over the chest muscle, and part of the chest muscle. A mastectomy may be an option if the cancer is too large or spread out to have a lumpectomy or if you had a lumpectomy that did not remove all of the cancer.

Sentinel Lymph Node Biopsy (SLNB) or Axillary Lymph Node Dissection (ALND) | A surgeon removes a small sample of nearby lymph nodes usually during a lumpectomy or mastectomy. The lymph nodes will be tested for cancer because lymph nodes are usually the first place where breast cancer spreads beyond the breast.

Breast Reconstruction | A surgery to restore the breast's shape after the cancer has been removed. In a cancer surgery, one or both of your breasts may have changed in shape or size or may have been completely removed. You can decide to have reconstructive surgery to rebuild your breast at the time of cancer surgery or at a later time, depending on your medical situation and personal preferences.

If maintaining your breast shape and size is important to you, talk to your surgeon about reconstruction options before you have cancer surgery. It may be included in your treatment plan if it's appropriate for you.

Treatment after surgery

You might hear your care team talk about **postoperative or adjuvant (A-juh-vunt) treatment**, which means treatment after surgery. This type of treatment may include radiation therapy in the area of the cancer or different forms of systemic (whole-body) therapies.

Other treatment options

Your treatment options for breast cancer may include radiation or systemic therapies.

Every treatment comes with possible benefits and possible risks. To help you remember some questions to ask, use your TNBC discussion guide—found on [UncoverTNBC.com](https://www.uncovertnbc.com)—and try to take a friend or family member to your doctor visit.

There is a lot to consider about cancer treatment. You probably have more questions than answers. Remember that your care team is there to help you—they should be a resource for guidance and support. If you're not getting the answers you need, keep asking or look for another resource. **This is your body and your life, and you should be cared for and treated with dignity and respect.**

You can also visit our website at [uncoverTNBC.com](https://www.uncovertnbc.com) for more support and resources.