

# Breast Cancer: Moving Forward After Treatment

## **Cancer Survivorship**

The American Cancer Society estimates that there are now more than 13.7 million cancer survivors living in the United States and that number is expected to grow to 18 million by the year 2022.

Many breast cancer survivors go into long-term remission, while others live with breast cancer as a chronic disease requiring ongoing treatment. A lot of breast cancer survivors lead normal lives with very few side effects. In fact, two-thirds of survivors report that cancer has not had a significant long-term impact on their lives.

## **Managing Challenges and Emotions After Treatment**

Hopefully this information helps you feel confident and positive about the future. That said, many women who complete cancer treatment still find they need help managing emotional and/or physical symptoms.

Therefore, it is important that your cancer team continue to monitor your physical and emotional status and assist you in your health and well-being after cancer.

You may find yourself experiencing some or all of the following feelings:

- You may struggle to come to terms with what you have been through.
- One may grow anxious, depressed or lonely. Some women feel compelled to act as if they are fine even if they are not. That is why it is important to remember that recovery is a process.
- You have functioned for a long period of time in a protected environment, in constant communication with healthcare professionals who have closely monitored your progress. Some patients feel a “separation anxiety”.

Though these fears will dissipate with time, it is important that you share these feelings, concerns and fears.

The simple fact of cancer treatment ending does not automatically make one strong and well. The gradual pace of recovery, which sometimes takes longer than treatment, is often a surprise to patients, family members and friends. Emotional and physical support is as important now as it was during your initial course of treatment.