Supported self-management follow-up for people with breast cancer
Information for patients, relatives and carers
What is supported self-management follow-up?

Supported self-management follow-up is a new approach to follow-up care after your cancer treatment has finished.

It replaces routine clinical appointments, which means that you don’t have to come to hospital when you are feeling well and are not experiencing any symptoms. Instead, you can contact your specialist team and arrange to see them as and when you need to.

Both the Department of Health and Social Care and Macmillan Cancer Support encourage supported self-management follow-up for people with breast cancer. It is now being used at many hospitals across the UK, although it may be referred to differently in other places.

How will it work for me?

Once you have finished your treatment for breast cancer, you will have an ‘end of treatment’ clinic appointment with your clinical nurse specialist (CNS). During this appointment, your CNS will talk to you about:

- your diagnosis
- your treatment and the possible side effects, both current and late
- any signs and symptoms to look out for and report
- being body and breast-aware
- arrangements for annual mammograms, if appropriate
• having bisphosphonate infusions and bone density scans, if appropriate

• the Health and Wellbeing Event at the Macmillan Support and Information Service, which offers useful information and tips on how to overcome some of the challenges you may face once your treatment has finished.

During this appointment your CNS will also assess your suitability for the supported self-management pathway. If you are suitable, your CNS will explain:

• how you can contact the team

• the process he/she will follow if you need to come back to the breast clinic at any time in the future.

Patients who need to come back to the clinic are usually offered an appointment, or an appropriate diagnostic test, within two weeks of their call.

**When should I contact the CNS?**

Please contact your CNS on **07966 325208** if:

• you have any concerns about managing your health and wellbeing following your treatment

• you develop any new signs or symptoms

• any of your original signs or symptoms return.

If your CNS can’t take your call, please leave a voicemail message and one of the team members will call you back. This will either be within 24 hours or the next working day.
What are the benefits of the supported self-management pathway?
The main advantage is that you will not have to attend routine follow-up appointments in the breast clinic. Many patients have told us that these appointments are often a source of anxiety and they find them unnecessary when they are feeling well.

Are there any risks?
Some people worry that not having regular follow-up appointments at the hospital may cause their cancer to go unnoticed if it comes back.

However, there is no evidence that routine follow-up appointments increase the chance of picking up recurrence of cancer, and patients tend to identify most recurrences themselves in between appointments. If there are any symptoms you are worried about, or if you have any concerns you would like to discuss, you will be able to contact your CNS.

What are the alternatives?
If you have specific concerns or health-related issues that make supported self-management follow-up unsuitable for you, you can have traditional follow-up appointments in the breast clinic. Your CNS will discuss this with you in more detail.
Will I continue to have regular mammograms?
Yes. Unless you have been advised otherwise, you will continue to have yearly mammograms for at least five years after your treatment, or until you are the right age to join the NHS Breast Screening Programme. We will contact you with the results of these.

If, as a result of your specific treatment, you don’t need to have annual mammograms, we will let you and your GP know.

If you are not offered a yearly mammogram, or if you don’t receive your results within a month of having a mammogram, please contact us.

Are there any other regular tests that I may need to have?
Following your treatment, we will advise you and your GP if you need any additional regular checks, such as bone density scans (DEXA scans). These scans can tell us if you are developing bone thinning which could lead to a condition called osteoporosis. They will be arranged via your GP who will receive clear instructions on what you need.

Where can I get more information?
You can find more information on our web pages at:
www.uclh.nhs.uk/breastfollow-up
If you need a large print, audio, braille, easy read, age-friendly or translated copy of this leaflet, please contact us on 020 3447 2682. We will do our best to meet your needs.