What is invasive breast cancer?

- It is breast cancer that has grown into the breast’s fatty tissue, skin, or both but has not spread far in the body

What health care is needed before treatment?

- A report of your health history and an exam of your body
- Pictures of the insides of your breasts by mammogram and maybe ultrasound, MRI
- Pictures of your bones and organs if there may be cancer
- Removal of tissue samples to test for cancer
- Tests for two markers—hormone and HER2 receptors—within breast cancer cells
- Blood tests to check for health problems if needed
- Advice on genetic tests if there’s a risk of breast cancer within your family
- Advice on fertility methods if you may want to have a baby after cancer treatment
- Some questions about distress to see if you need help
How is invasive cancer treated?

- Some women first receive chemotherapy to shrink tumors before surgery. A cancer drug, called a HER2 antibody, may be added if the cancer is HER2 positive.  

- Surgery to remove the cancer is often a key part of treatment. For some women, a lumpectomy to spare breast tissue is an option. Other women receive a total mastectomy, which removes the whole breast. At least a few lymph nodes will be removed for cancer testing. Some women have breast reconstruction to reshape or rebuild their breast(s).  

- To prevent the cancer from returning, you may receive chemotherapy after surgery. Doctors decide to give chemotherapy based on many factors.  

- Most women receive radiation therapy after surgery. The breast or chest wall may be treated. Nearby lymph node may be treated as well.  

- Endocrine therapy is a standard treatment for hormone receptor–positive breast cancer. It is often taken for 5 to 10 years. It lowers the chance of the cancer returning.

What does follow-up care involve?

- It includes tests to check your overall health and for cancer. Also, care for ongoing or new health problems caused by cancer treatment will be given. Support for a healthy lifestyle is given since treatment results may be improved.

What if the cancer returns?

- Cancer that returns in the breast or nearby sites may be treated with surgery, radiation therapy, or both. Treatment with cancer drugs may be added.

What are some tips for making good treatment decisions?

- Don’t be shy and ask your doctors questions. They are there to help.  

- Get a second opinion. Even doctors get second opinions.  

- Support groups can be helpful. You can learn a lot from others.  

- Compare the pros and cons of each option.