It is cancer that has spread beyond the breast to a distant site. Distant sites include bones, lungs, liver, and the brain. Stage IV breast cancer is metastatic cancer that was found at diagnosis.

Tests that look for signs of disease
- Medical history
- Physical exam
- CBC
- Liver function tests

Tests that show where the cancer has spread
- CT scan of your chest
- MRI scan of your brain if you have certain symptoms
- CT or MRI of your belly area and maybe between your hip bones
- Bone scan or sodium fluoride PET/CT
- FDG PET/CT may be done especially if other tests are unclear
- X-rays of bones may be needed

Tests of cell parts
- Hormone receptor test
- HER2 receptor test
- Genetic testing if you are likely to have hereditary breast cancer—passed down from parent to child

A clinical trial. A clinical trial is a type of research that studies how safe and helpful a treatment is. Ask your doctors if there is a clinical trial that you could join. Also ask about the pros and cons of that trial.
### What are other treatment options?

#### For hormone receptor-positive breast cancer
- Chemotherapy may be given first if the cancer is quickly growing within internal organs.
- If you’re premenopausal, options include treatments that limit the ovaries from making hormones given with other hormone therapy.
- If you’re postmenopausal, options are treatments that block hormones from cancer cells or block a protein that makes estrogen.

#### For breast cancer that doesn’t respond to 3 hormone regimens given one right after the other
- If HER2-negative cancer, an option is chemotherapy.
- If HER2-positive cancer, options are targeted treatments that block HER2 from cancer cells given with or without chemotherapy.

#### For hormone receptor-negative breast cancer
- If HER2-negative cancer, an option is chemotherapy.
- If HER2-positive cancer, options are targeted treatments that block HER2 from cancer cells given with or without chemotherapy.
- Hormone therapy may be given if cancer has spread to bones, soft tissue, or if not causing symptoms, the internal organs.

### Is the treatment working?

Different types of tests will be repeated on a regular basis to check treatment results. Some tests will be the same as those given before treatment.

### What if the cancer grows during treatment?

Often, one treatment is used until it stops working and then another is started. Some women live for years with a high quality of life when following this plan.