We Celebrate Tomorrow:
Latinas Living Beyond Breast Cancer
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About Living Beyond Breast Cancer

This project would not have been possible without the generous support of The Paula A. Seidman Fund. LBBC dedicates this publication to Paula’s memory and to her commitment to helping other women affected by breast cancer.
A special message from Soraya

You have probably already heard this phrase but it bears repeating time and time again: breast cancer is not a death sentence. It will change your life immediately and permanently. It is up to us to make the changes work in our favor. This is no easy task, but it is a possible path and I urge you to follow me and others who have found a way to redefine ourselves within our new bodies and our new lives.

Since my breast cancer diagnosis, I have returned to my music career and I have set out to educate and inspire women, especially young women and minority women. We must break the cycle of silence by increasing the access to information that one day could save their lives.

You and your family are probably going through a difficult time right now. You may have many unanswered questions and feel much uncertainty. I urge you to use the rich resource you are holding in your hands and let it inspire you to search further. Informed decisions should be your goal. If you do not know, ask. Ask until you understand. Use every tool available: this is going to be the fight of your life! Treat it as such.

This book was written by women like you. There is probably something in this book that will speak directly to you. Let your soul listen to that voice.

Stay strong, stay positive and let the evolution begin. It will not be easy, but you can and will get through this. Appreciate the present, enjoy what you have, accept your reality and live each moment to its fullest.

Believe in this possibility and never look back! Let’s celebrate tomorrow…today!!!!

Con cariño,
Soraya
Latin Pop singer, songwriter and breast cancer survivor
A Friendly Word From Us

Dear Friend:
We dedicate this book to you, your family and friends. We are a group of concerned health care professionals and counselors who care about you. Some of us are Latinas who have had breast cancer ourselves.

In this book, we will tell you about our experiences. We want to share the many ideas that helped us cope. Please share it with others who have breast cancer. You can read the whole book from cover to cover. You can also read one page at a time. You can find the underlined words in the dictionary.

We dedicate this book to the survivors. It is for the many women who celebrate life after breast cancer. We know you can do it too!

With all our love,

From the many people who have helped to create this book
We are strong Latinas. Some of us have lived through emigration, trauma and hard times. We have been affected by breast cancer. We also see ourselves as more than just survivors.

We are Survivors

“We do not let cancer win our lives.”

“We believe in life, not death.”

“We keep our faith and hope.”

“We are stronger women now.”

“We know how much our families and friends mean to us.”

“Every day, we celebrate today and tomorrow!”
Lucía:
When I heard my doctor’s voice on the phone, I knew it was bad news. He said I had cancer. I felt like I had been given a death sentence. I said, “Tell me how long I have.” He said, “Wait a minute. You don’t have to die.” Then I asked, “What do I have to do to win the battle against breast cancer?”

Oscar:
The doctor said that he had to remove my wife’s breast. She worried about what I was going to think. I said, “Nina, I love you for who you are, not for your physical self. Please don’t be ashamed.” Of course I was scared. I thought she was going to die. We turned to church. The faith gave us hope. Our whole family got strong. My wife lost her breast, but we have become closer.

Alma:
When I found out I had breast cancer, I cried and cried. I was so afraid. At first I kept my news to myself, and hoped it would go away. Then I prayed and knew my family needed me around. I gathered everyone and told them about the cancer. My daughter told me that she would be with me every step of the way.

We all respond differently to the news about breast cancer.

Facing Breast Cancer

Oscar:
The doctor said that he had to remove my wife’s breast. She worried about what I was going to think. I said, “Nina, I love you for who you are, not for your physical self. Please don’t be ashamed.” Of course I was scared. I thought she was going to die. We turned to church. The faith gave us hope. Our whole family got strong. My wife lost her breast, but we have become closer.

Lucía:
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Dealing with Feelings About Breast Cancer

Don’t let your feelings stop you from taking care of yourself.

**Denial:**
“The Lord gave it to me, so he will take it away.”
“I don’t feel sick, so it may not be true.”
**The truth:** Feelings of denial can help you cope, but only for a little while.

**Fear:**
“I will lose my breast and my hair. How will I look?”
“Am I going to die?”
**The truth:** Feelings of fear are natural. Don’t let them stop you from getting treatment.

**Family worries:**
“Who will take care of my family if I am sick?”
“Will my husband still love me?”
**The truth:** Your family wants to be strong for you.

**Money worries:**
“I don’t have health insurance. No one will want to help me.”
“How much time will I miss from work?”
“Will my insurance pay for everything?”
**The truth:** Ask your social worker for help with these worries.

**People worries:**
“People will stop talking to me.”
“They will think cancer is contagious.”
**The truth:** You can’t catch cancer or give it to someone else. Tell people they will not get it from touching or hugging you.
Taking the Next Steps

Having breast cancer is not easy but there are things you can do to feel better. Here are four steps that can help you heal and stay strong:

Step #1: Keep a Notebook
To help you get organized, begin to keep a notebook related to your cancer. Ask someone if you need help.

You can write:
• Your questions and the answers.
• Reminders.
• Things to do.

_write in your notebook_

Step #2: Learn About Breast Cancer
Each person’s cancer and treatment plan may be different.

Learn about yours:
• Breast cancer doesn’t always grow fast.
• Ask your doctor how much time you have to decide about your treatment.
• Talk with family or someone you trust to help make decisions.

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_write in your notebook_
Step #3: Stay in Touch
Our families and friends are special to us. Talk about your feelings, fears and emotions with them.

Things you can do to help yourself:
• Tell your friends and family what you need.
• Find people in your church or community who are good listeners.
• Cry when you need to.
• Stop trying to be a superwoman.
• Talk to another woman who has had breast cancer.

Step #4: Know Your Reasons for Getting Medical Treatment
Even though you feel cancer is the end of the world, you must get treatment.

“I wanted to survive to see my grandchildren grow.”

“I didn’t want to lose my breast, but I didn’t want to lose my life either.”

“I knew that ‘uña de gato’ would not help me this time. Even though it claims to cure cancer, I could not take chances.”

“My mother always said that God will help you, if you help yourself.”

Remember:
• You have the right to think about your own needs.
• Medical treatment can save your life.
Getting the Best Care
Good treatment depends on good medical care.

What Good Medical Care Means:

- Having a qualified health care team. This means doctors, nurses and people who are good at what they do.
- Getting the most up-to-date treatment.
- Trusting the staff that treats you.
- Getting your questions answered.
- Getting follow-up care after treatment.

You have the right to:

- Get the medical care you need even if you don’t have health insurance.
- Participate in medical research (also known as clinical trials).
- Get a second opinion.
- Receive social services and support when you need them.
- Get an interpreter if you need one.

Finding the Right Doctor and Health Care Team

It is very important to find doctors you can trust and feel comfortable with. Look for doctors with the best knowledge about breast cancer.

Your health care team includes: doctors, specialists, nurses, social workers and other health care providers.
Your health care team may also include: a gynecologist, a primary care doctor, a medical oncologist (cancer doctor), a radiation oncologist and a surgeon.

Everyone on your health care team should know about your treatment. But your medical oncologist should:

- Be in charge of all of your medical care and recovery.
- Keep records of all your medical care.
- Tell you about your progress.
- Make sure that there are enough follow-up doctor visits.

Getting the Most out of Your Doctor Visits

To make sure you get the best care, here are things you can do:

**Before your appointment:**

- Write what you want to tell the doctor about yourself.
- Bring a friend to help you ask questions and give support.
- Ask permission to bring a tape recorder.

**Remember:**

- Every question you have deserves an answer.
- Ask your doctor or nurse to tell you one thing at a time.
- Ask all of your questions.
- Ask for help if you don’t know what to do.
At your appointment:

• Tell your doctor about your fears and concerns.
• Ask all your questions, even the ones that seem simple.
• If you don’t understand, tell your doctor.
• Tell your doctor what remedies, herbs, teas and natural pills you are taking. They could affect your treatment.
• Write down the date of your next appointment.

📝 In your notebook, write what you want to tell or ask your doctor.
Dealing with Beliefs and Truths About Treatment

Don’t let your beliefs keep you from getting treatment. Treatment can save your life.

Belief: “My grandmother says that the side effects of treatment for cancer are worse than the cancer itself. I better not get any treatment. We will all die anyway. It is God’s will.”

The truth:
• If you don’t treat cancer, it will grow. Then, it will affect other parts of the body.
• Some treatments may make you feel sick. But your doctor can help you prevent or deal with the side effects.

Belief: “There are remedies I can take to kill my cancer. Besides, I don’t have health insurance to pay for the treatment.”

The truth:
• Home remedies such as teas or herbs won’t make breast cancer go away.
• Talk to a social worker. They can help you get the treatment you need.

Belief: “I got it from eating too much canned food. Maybe if I stop eating that, it will go away.”

The truth:
• Your cancer will not go away because you stop doing what you think caused it.
• Only medical care can help you. Treatment can save your life.
Choosing Your Treatment

You may have several choices for treatment. Ask your doctor how much time you have to make a decision.

Juanita did not know what to ask about the treatment:

With so much new information, I had a hard time paying attention. I asked my oldest daughter, Sonia, to come with me to my visits. She always knows what to ask. She helped me decide on my treatment. I could not have done it alone.

Questions to ask about your cancer:
• What is the name of the type of cancer I have?
• Can you tell me in simple words what my pathology report means?
• How large is my lump?

Questions to ask before you make decisions:
• Is there more than one treatment for my cancer?
• What tests do I need?
• Will my health insurance cover all my treatment?
• How much time do I have before I must decide on a treatment?
• When can I go back to work?

In your notebook, write the questions you want to ask.
Kinds of Treatment

The treatment that works for one person may not work for another. Ask your doctor to discuss the best treatment for you.

Norma:
I was scared to choose the treatment. Would I make the wrong choice? My doctor and I looked at the options together. Then I talked to my family. We decided on surgery and chemotherapy. Yes, I got sick and I lost my hair. At times, I felt like quitting. But I got through it. Here I am two years later, enjoying life.

Breast cancer is usually treated with a combination of treatments.

Treatments are put into two groups:

1. Local Treatment
   This treatment focuses on two areas: the breast and the areas around and under your arm (lymph nodes). The different kinds of local treatments are surgery and radiation therapy.

   Surgery: The main breast cancer surgeries are lumpectomy and mastectomy. Underarm lymph nodes are usually removed with both types of surgery. Ask your doctor if you can have a sentinel lymph node biopsy. This therapy removes fewer lymph nodes.

   Radiation Therapy: It is used to kill cancer cells. Sometimes patients get it as the main treatment.

2. Systemic Treatment
   This treatment uses medicines to kill any leftover cancer cells in the body. There are three kinds of medicines: chemotherapy, hormonal therapy and biologic therapy.

Questions you can ask about the different treatments:

- Will the treatment hurt?
- What are the side effects from each treatment?
- Will I lose my hair?
- Will I lose my breast?
- Will I feel sick?

In your notebook, write your questions and answers about treatment.
Clinical Trials
Your doctor may ask you to participate in a clinical trial. You get to decide whether you want to participate or not.

What is a clinical trial?
A clinical trial is a research study. It is done with people who volunteer. It helps find new ways to prevent, diagnose and treat cancer. Treatment clinical trials compare new treatments with regular treatments.

To decide to be part of a clinical trial, it is important you know the following:

• Clinical trials are safe and patients receive excellent care in doctor’s offices and hospitals.
• You may have more tests and doctor visits than people who get regular treatment.
• Before participating, talk with your doctor’s office about your insurance. Ask if you will need to pay any costs.
• If you do not have insurance, some studies may have funds to cover your costs.

Questions to ask about clinical trials:

• Do I qualify for a clinical trial?
• How will it benefit me, my family and others?
• Can I change my mind after I join the trial?
• Can I still see my own doctor?
• How often will my doctor’s appointments be?
• Do you have information about the study?

To learn more about clinical trials or to locate a clinical trial near you, call: The National Cancer Institute’s Cancer Information Service at 800-422-6237

In your notebook, write other questions you want to ask.
Managing Side Effects of Treatments

Surgery, radiation and chemotherapy can make you feel sick. Arm or hand swelling, called lymphedema, can happen too. Ask your doctor or nurse for ways to prevent or deal with side effects.

Miriam:
At first, all I could think about was that I would lose my beautiful hair. All my family gave money to buy my wig. When the time came, I had enough money for three wigs. Soon I had three different hairstyles. I looked great all the time. Now my own hair is all back and more beautiful than ever.

How your treatment affects you depends on the following:

- The type of surgery you have.
- Whether or not you get radiation therapy.
- The kind and amount of chemotherapy you get.
- Whether you get different treatments at the same time (radiation and chemotherapy).
- How healthy you are, or whether you have other illnesses.

Remember:
- Ask your doctor or nurse what you can do to lessen or prevent side effects.
- Most side effects are mild and go away.
Choosing to Rebuild Your Breast

Some women who have had their breast removed choose to have it rebuilt. This is called breast reconstruction. Sometimes, this can be done at the same time as the mastectomy. While reconstruction is an optional surgery, your insurance will usually pay for it. If you don’t have insurance, find out about the Breast and Cervical Cancer Prevention and Treatment Program in your state. You can also decide to use an artificial breast or breast prosthesis. Find out about all your options.

Lucy chose to rebuild her breast:
I was told I had to have my breast removed. I was afraid of what my husband would think of me. I thought I would look horrible. Then I heard about breast reconstruction. Now, I show my new breast to women who need to make a decision.

Juanita decided not to have her breast rebuilt:
I did not care about how I looked. I cared about staying alive. Besides, I was afraid to have one more surgery and what they were going to put inside me. After all, I don’t need a breast to make me feel good about myself.

Questions to ask your doctor about breast reconstruction:
• Can I rebuild my breast?
• Should I rebuild my breast now or later?
• What types of reconstruction can I have?
• What are the risks?
• Will I get back feeling in my breast?

✍️ In your notebook, write your questions and answers.
Getting Support
Finding Help

Support is having someone who can listen and be there for you. Support helps you and your loved ones cope with breast cancer.

Susana wanted to talk about it:
Sometimes I felt like telling the world what I was going through. I wanted people to listen to me. Was that too much to ask? Some people didn’t pay attention. I wondered if I was being a pain in the...you know what.

Mario did not want to talk about it:
I got very quiet when I learned my wife had cancer. I never cried, got mad or upset. I did not want to upset her. I did not want her to know that I was afraid she was going to die. I just sat and stared at the floor. I didn’t know what to do.

Not everybody is ready or able to give support:

• Some people are not ready to hear about breast cancer. It is scary to them too.
• Others have a hard time dealing with their own pain, suffering and fears. They may be afraid of losing you to cancer.

Remember:

- Find the people who can give the support you need.
- Stay away from people who don’t listen or help you.
- Talk to your social worker about ways to get support.
Leaning on Family and Friends For Help

Family and friends can help you in many ways.

**Rosita:**
I felt stressed and depressed. Sometimes I felt that having breast cancer was the end of the world. I asked my family and friends for help. Their support made me stronger. Now, nothing can defeat me. I will do anything to stay alive and happy. I know that one day I will see my granddaughter get married!

Ways family and friends can help:

- Go with you to your doctor visits and treatments.
- Ask questions about the things they don’t understand.
- Pray with you, hug you and kiss you.
- Visit you, cook for you, take you out and make you laugh.
- Ask you what bothers you—like smells or certain foods.
- Be there to help with your children.

Tell your family and friends what you need. Here is what you can say:

- I will tell you how I feel and what I need.
- Fixing my cancer is not your job, but being there for me does help me.
- Sometimes I need company, but other times I need to be alone.
- Be there for me even when you don’t know what to say.
- I would rather not have help if it is given with an attitude.
Loving Your Children

Each child reacts differently when his or her mom has breast cancer. How a child reacts depends upon his or her age, personality and daily life activities. Children may or may not ask questions, even when they have them.

Carmencita:
I was only 15 when mom got cancer. I was afraid for her and afraid that I would get it too. I didn’t want to talk about it. I couldn’t eat and all I wanted to do was to sleep. Mommy knew I was depressed about the cancer. Even though she was sick and dealing with her treatment, she never gave up on helping me. One day, she brought food to my bed and begged me to eat. I hugged her and cried with her. I told her I would be strong too. I promised that together we would fight the breast cancer. And we did!

Ways to help your children:
• Answer their questions honestly.
• Ask them about their feelings and listen to their responses.
• Let them know that it is OK to be scared, angry, sad or mad.
• Try to smile and show your best face. If you are sad, tell them.
• Find information, videos or books about breast cancer that you can read with your children.
Being Part of a Support Group

A support group is a group of people who meet to talk about surviving breast cancer.

**Sylvia:**
I came to the United States five years ago. I wanted to make more money to support my family back at home. When I found out I had breast cancer, I thought, “This is all I need. I can’t take time off from work. I will not get paid.” At the time, I had no health insurance and few friends to turn to.

**How can a breast cancer support group help?**
- There is usually a person who knows a lot about breast cancer.
- The group helps you realize you are not alone.
- The group helps you find new information you may use.

**What if I can’t find a support group where I live or work?**
**What if I can’t find a support group that speaks my language?**

**You can start a support group. Here is what you can do:**
- Get help from a social worker or get a friend to help you start one.
- Find a place to meet.
- Find other breast cancer survivors and invite them to a meeting.
- Ask local churches and organizations to distribute a flyer about your group.
- Invite family members and friends.
- Find a health care provider to answer questions people may have.
What to Do if You Don’t Like Support Groups

Not everyone likes sharing with a group. To get support, you don’t have to join a group. Some people get support from their church. Family, friends and people who care for you may be your support group. You may only want help from one person. The main thing is to get support from someone!

Other ways to get support:

• Find one or more people who are breast cancer survivors.
• If you don’t have family nearby, ask your neighbors for help.
• Ask your doctors, nurses and social worker for ideas.
• Call Living Beyond Breast Cancer’s Survivors’ Helpline: 888-753-5222.

Dealing with Stress

Having breast cancer can be very stressful. To help you stay calm:

• Talk about your stress, worries and concerns.
• Take a break. Take a long, warm bath.
• Take your time and do only the things that are important.
• Talk with your doctor about exercise. Walking, dancing and exercising can help you relieve stress.
• Visit a church, pray or meditate.

Remember:

❖ Tell your doctor or social worker if you feel too sad to eat or sleep.
❖ Try to find the bright side of things. Remember the saying “No hay mal que por bien no venga.” (There is always goodness in all bad things.)
Loving Your Partner

Many women worry about how breast cancer will affect their sexuality. Anxiety over the side effects of treatment may make you lose interest in sex. Even though your body may feel different, you are still the same person. Don’t be embarrassed to ask your doctor questions about your sexuality.

Caution: It is dangerous to get pregnant during your treatment. Ask your doctor about ways to prevent pregnancy that are safe for you to use.

Tips to help you improve your intimacy:

- Listen to your body and mind.
- Talk with your partner about how you feel.
- Make sure you know what you both want and are ready for.
- If you are having problems with intimacy, talk with someone.
Loving Yourself

Do just about anything you want to in order to feel good about yourself. Ask your beautician, a girlfriend or your daughter to help you.

Julia was afraid of cancer changing her life:
I am single and I worried about how breast cancer would affect finding a partner. But cancer did not stop me from meeting people or having dates. I did things that helped me feel and look beautiful.

Things you can do to feel and look beautiful:
• Choose a wig that looks like your natural hair.
• You can also go for a totally new look.
• Use scarves and beautiful hats that match your outfit.
• Take care of your skin. Chemotherapy and radiation therapy may dry out your skin.
• Practice using an eyebrow pencil to highlight your eyebrows.
• Wear outfits and colors that make you look your best.
Living After Treatment Is Completed

After you finish treatment, it is common to have mixed feelings:

“I looked forward to getting better and going on with my life.”

“I worried about cancer coming back.”

“I could not wait for my hair to grow back.”

“I was happy for my family. It was over for them too.”

Follow-up care will help you get back into your normal routine:

• Always go to your doctor’s appointments, even when you are tired or feel well.

• Work with your doctor to make a plan that works for both of you.

• Schedule your follow-up appointments.

✍ Write your plan in your notebook.

Remember:

✧ It is normal to feel nervous about cancer coming back.

✧ Get counseling if you need help dealing with your feelings.

✧ Talk with your husband or partner about ways to be intimate.

✧ Congratulate yourself.
Life After Breast Cancer

Life after breast cancer means something different for each person. Celebrating today and tomorrow with your families and friends is important now and always.

What survivors say about celebrating tomorrow:

“I look at things differently.”

“I realize that I am the same person I was before breast cancer.”

“I let go of the things that are not important.”

“I enjoy the little things that fill my spirit.”

“I see that each day is a gift, and I am learning to enjoy it.”
“We count our blessings, and we celebrate tomorrow.”
Looking For Resources

❖ Your Local Agency:


❖ Your Contact Person:


❖ Your Phone Number:


❖ Other Phone Numbers:


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American Cancer Society (ACS)  
800-227-2345 (English and Spanish)  
www.cancer.org (English)  
www.cancer.org/docroot/ESP/ESP_0.asp (Spanish)

Breastcancer.org  
www.breastcancer.org (English)

CancerCare  
800-813-4673  
(English and Spanish)  
www.cancercare.org (English)  
www.cancercare.org/EnEspanol (Spanish)

Día de la Mujer Latina  
678-494-8879 (English and Spanish)  
www.diadelamujerlatina.org (English and Spanish)

Healthfinder  
www.healthfinder.gov (English)  
www.healthfinder.gov/espanol (Spanish)

Intercultural Cancer Council  
713-798-4617 (English)  
www.iccnetwork.org (English)

Las Isabelas  
408-287-4890 (English and Spanish)  
www.lasisabelas.org (English)  
www.lasisabelas.org/spindex.html (Spanish)

Latin American Health Institute  
617-350-6900 (English and Spanish)  
www.lhi.org (English)

Living Beyond Breast Cancer (LBBC)  
888-753-5222 (English and Spanish)  
www.lbbc.org (English)

Medline Plus Health Information  
www.medlineplus.gov (English)  
www.medlineplus.gov/spanish (Spanish)

National Alliance for Hispanic Health  
202-387-5000 (English and Spanish)  
www.hispanichealth.org (English and Spanish)

The National Cancer Institute (NCI)  
Cancer Information Service  
800-422-6237 (English and Spanish)  
www.cancer.gov (English)  
www.cancer.gov/espanol (Spanish)

National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship  
877-622-7937 (English)  
www.canceradvocacy.org (English)

National Institutes of Health  
301-496-4000 (English)  
www.nih.gov (English)  
www.salud.nih.gov (Spanish)

National Latina Health Organization/  
Organización Nacional de la Salud de la Mujer Latina  
510-534-1362 (English and Spanish)  
www.latinahealth.org (English and Spanish)

Redes en Acción  
www.redesenaccion.org (English)

Salud en Acción  
www.saludenaccion.org (English)

SHARE: Self-Help for Women With Breast or Ovarian Cancer  
212-382-2111 (English)  
212-719-4454 (Spanish)  
www.sharecancersupport.org (English)  
www.sharecancersupport.org/pages/03Latina/latina.html (Spanish)

Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation  
800-462-9273 (English and Spanish)  
www.komen.org (English and Spanish)

Y-ME National Breast Cancer Organization  
800-221-2141 (English)  
800-986-9505 (Spanish)  
www.y-me.org (English)  
www.y-me.org/espanol (Spanish)
Dictionary

Here is a list of words and their meaning. Some of these words are included in this book.

A
Advanced cancer: A general term describing stages of cancer in which the disease has spread from the primary site to other parts of the body.
Antibody: A protein produced by immune system cells and released into the blood. Antibodies defend against foreign agents such as bacteria.

B
Benign: Not cancer, not malignant.
Biologic therapy: Uses substances that boost the body's immune system to fight against cancer.
Biopsy: The removal of tissue and cells to see under a microscope whether cancer cells are present.
Breast cancer: Cancer that starts in the breast.
Breast conservation therapy: Surgery to remove a breast cancer and a small amount of benign tissue around the cancer, without removing any other part of the breast.
Breast implant: A sac used to increase breast size or bring back the shape of a breast after mastectomy.
Breast reconstruction: Surgery that rebuilds the shape of a breast after mastectomy.
Breast self-exam (BSE): A method that a woman uses to check her own breasts for lumps or suspicious changes.
Breast specialist: A health care professional who has a special interest and training in breast health.

C
Cancer: A disease that causes cells in the body to change and grow out of control. Most types of cancer cells form a lump or mass called a tumor.
Case manager: The member of a cancer team, usually a nurse or oncology nurse specialist, who coordinates medical care.
Cell: The basic unit of which all living things are made.
Chemotherapy: Treatment with drugs to destroy cancer cells.

Clinical breast examination: An examination of the breasts done by a health professional such as a doctor or nurse.
Clinical trials: Studies of new treatments in patients.

D
Diagnosis: Identifying a disease by its signs or symptoms.
Ductal carcinoma in situ: Abnormal cells that involve only the lining of a breast duct. The cells have not spread to other tissues in the breast.
Duct: A hollow passage for gland secretions. In the breast, a passage through which milk passes to the nipple.

E
Endocrine glands: Glands that release hormones into the bloodstream.

G
Glands: Organs that produce and release substances used nearby or in other parts of the body.

H
Hormone: A chemical made by glands in the body that circulate in the bloodstream. They control the actions of certain cells or organs.
Hormone replacement: The use of estrogen and progesterone from an outside source after the body has stopped producing its own.
Hormonal therapy: Treatment with medicines that kill cancer cells or slow their growth.

I
Immunotherapy: Treatments that help the body's immune system to fight a disease such as cancer.

L
Lump: Any kind of mass in the breast or elsewhere in the body.
Lumpectomy: Surgery to remove the breast tumor and a small amount of normal tissue around it.
Lymph nodes: Small bean-shaped collections of immune system tissue found along lymphatic vessels. They help fight infections and also have a role in fighting cancer.
Lymphedema: A complication in which excess fluid collects in the arms or legs. This often happens after the lymph nodes and vessels are removed in surgery or injured by radiation.

Lymphoma: A cancer of lymphatic system.

M
Malignant: Cancerous. Malignant tumors can invade and destroy nearby tissue and spread to other parts of the body.

Mammogram, mammography: An x-ray of the breast. A way of detecting breast cancers that cannot be felt.

Mastectomy: Surgery to remove the breast, or as much of the breast tissue as possible.

Medical oncologist: A doctor who is specially trained to diagnose and treat cancer with chemotherapy and other drugs.

N
Nurse practitioner: A registered nurse with a master’s or doctoral degree. Licensed nurse practitioners diagnose and manage illness and disease, usually working closely with a doctor.

O
Oncologist: A doctor with special training in the diagnosis and treatment of cancer.

P
Pathology report: This tells you what the doctor finds after looking at the tissue and cells of a tumor under a microscope.

Prosthesis: An artificial form, such as a breast prosthesis, that can be worn under the clothing after a mastectomy.

R
Radiation oncologist: A doctor who specializes in using radiation to treat cancer.

Radiation therapy: Treatment with high energy rays (such as x-rays) to kill or shrink cancer cells.

Radiologist: A doctor with special training in diagnosing diseases by interpreting x-rays.

S
Sentinel lymph node biopsy: Removal and examination of the sentinel node (the first lymph node to which cancer cells are likely to spread from a primary tumor). If the node is cancer-free, fewer nodes are removed.

Side effects: Unwanted effects of treatment, such as hair loss.

Staging: The process of finding out whether the cancer has spread and, if so, how far.

Systemic therapy: Treatment that reaches and affects cells throughout the body; for example, chemotherapy.

T
Therapy: Any of the measures to treat the disease.

Tissue: A collection of cells that come together to perform a function.

Tumor: An abnormal lump or mass of tissue. Tumors can be benign (not cancerous) or malignant (cancerous).

X
X-ray: A form of radiation. At low levels, x-rays can produce an image of the body on film. At high levels, x-rays can destroy cancer cells.

Parts of this dictionary have been taken from the National Cancer Institute’s Breast Cancer Glossary Terms and the American Cancer Society’s Breast Cancer Dictionary. It is written at a higher reading level than the rest of the book.
About Living Beyond Breast Cancer

This book was produced by Living Beyond Breast Cancer (LBBC), a non-profit education and support organization dedicated to empowering all women affected by breast cancer to live as long as possible with the best quality of life. LBBC’s programs and resources include:

Conferences and Teleconferences
Semi-annual, large-scale educational conferences and teleconferences feature experts who share the latest technical and practical information about important medical, social and psychological issues.

Survivors’ Helpline 888.753.5222
Confidential, toll-free, around-the-clock telephone service staffed by volunteer breast cancer survivors. Spanish–speaking volunteers available.

Outreach
Community-based outreach initiative for medically underserved women and families. Programs meet the cultural and medical needs of specific communities.

Getting Connected: African-Americans Living Beyond Breast Cancer
This 40-plus page book promotes informed decision-making, while providing support, encouragement, and inspiration to African-American women as they go through treatment and begin living beyond breast cancer.

Web Site, www.lbbc.org
Online guide to all LBBC programs. Features newsletters, profiles, links, message boards, and news of upcoming programs and events.

Young Survivors Network
Focuses on the needs of women diagnosed with breast cancer before age 45. Programs include annual Young Survivors Conference in Philadelphia and a Young Survivors Network, an educational and networking group that meets regularly in the Philadelphia area. CD’s and audiotapes of events available.

Quarterly Educational Newsletter
Addresses emerging issues in breast cancer detection and treatment and covers other topics of interest or concern to women affected by breast cancer.

Library and Resource Center
The Paula A. Seidman Library and Resource Center is located in Ardmore, PA, at the LBBC office, and is free and open to the public.

For More Information Contact:
Living Beyond Breast Cancer
10 East Athens Avenue
Suite 204
Ardmore, PA 19003
Phone: 610.645.4567
Fax: 610.645.4573
Web: www.lbbc.org
E-mail: mail@lbbc.org
Survivors’ Helpline: 888.753.5222
One Last Word…
You Can Find Breast Cancer Early

Nancy found breast cancer early:
My breast looked normal, so I thought there was no need to get a mammogram. I finally agreed to get one when I turned 44. To my surprise, my mammogram showed a little dot the size of a rice grain. It was cancer. The mammogram saved me bigger trouble—and my breast!

Why is it important to find breast cancer early?
• All women are at risk for getting breast cancer.
• Early detection of breast cancer can save your life.
• The earlier you detect it, the better.

Here are the guidelines* to follow:
If you are a woman between the ages of 20 and 39:
• Ask your doctor or nurse to examine your breasts every three years.
If you are a woman who is 40 years old or older:
• Get a mammogram once a year. Continue to do this for as long as you are in good health. Also, ask your doctor to examine your breasts once a year.

For all women:
• Breast self-exam is also an option for finding changes in your breasts. Report any change in your breasts to your health care provider right away.
• When your doctor or nurse examines your breasts it is called a clinical breast exam.

For more information on finding cancer early, call: American Cancer Society at 800-227-2345.

* These are the 2003 guidelines from the American Cancer Society.

Remember:
❖ Even if you don’t have health insurance, you can still have a free mammogram.
❖ See your doctor if you feel a lump or notice any change in your breast.