

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF METASTATIC BREAST CANCER (MBC)

Metastatic Breast Cancer

After treatment for early or locally advanced breast cancer (stages I, II and III), it's possible for breast cancer to return (recur) and spread to other parts of the body. This is called metastatic breast cancer (MBC), also known as stage IV breast cancer. It's the most advanced stage of breast cancer. The most common sites for breast cancer to spread are the brain, lung, liver or bones.

The risk of MBC varies from person to person. Most people will not develop MBC, but it's important to be aware of the signs and symptoms.

Signs and Symptoms

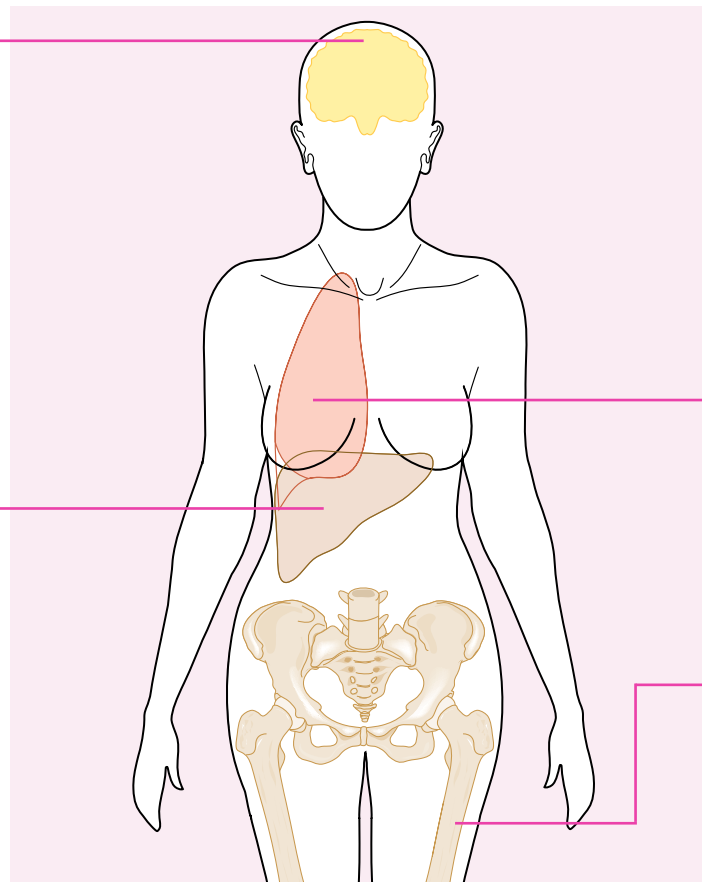
The picture below shows the most common signs and symptoms of MBC. If you've been treated for breast cancer and any of these signs or symptoms **persist for 2 weeks or longer** – tell your doctor. They may be related to other health conditions or side effects from treatment but could be signs of metastasis (spread).

Brain

- Attention or memory problems
- Blurred vision, dizziness or headaches
- Seizures
- Loss of balance
- Constant nausea or vomiting
- Confusion or personality changes

Liver

- Itchy skin or rash
- Yellowing of skin or whites of eyes (jaundice)
- Pain or swelling in belly
- Digestive problems such as change in bowel habits or loss of appetite



Other signs and symptoms:

- Fatigue
- Weight loss
- Difficulty urinating
- Increased lymph node size under arm or other places

Lung

- Hoarseness or constant dry cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing

Bone

- Bone, back, neck or joint pain
- Bone fractures
- Swelling

This information is important, but remember most people with these signs and symptoms will not have MBC.

This fact sheet is intended to be a brief overview. For more information, visit komen.org or call Susan G. Komen's Breast Care Helpline at 1-877 GO KOMEN (1-877-465-6636) Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. ET, or email at helpline@komen.org. Se habla español.

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Resource

Susan G. Komen®
1-877 GO KOMEN
(1-877-465-6636)
komen.org

Related Online Resources

- [Follow-Up Medical Care After Breast Cancer Treatment](#)
- [Talking with Your Doctor](#)
- [Breast cancer recurrence](#)
- [Side effects after breast cancer treatment ends](#)
- [Metastatic Breast Cancer: What Is It?](#)

Questions to ask the doctor:

- [Chemotherapy and Side Effects](#)
- [Radiation Therapy and Side Effects](#)
- [Hormone Therapy and Side Effects](#)

Don't panic if you have these signs or symptoms. It doesn't always mean the breast cancer has spread. For example, bone pain may be a sign of arthritis or muscle strain. And many people have fatigue for a number of reasons. Most people with these signs and symptoms will not have MBC.

Routine medical care after treatment for early breast cancer:

After breast cancer treatment, see your doctor for regular follow-up visits to manage side effects of treatment and other problems you may be having. During these visits you can discuss possible signs of metastasis and ways to lower your risk of recurrence.

- Get a **mammogram** every 12 months after a mastectomy. If you had a lumpectomy, have a mammogram 6 to 12 months after radiation therapy ends, then every year.*
- Get a **physical exam** 1-4 times a year (depending on your situation) for 5 years, then every year.*
- For women at higher risk of osteoporosis, get **bone density** tests every 1 to 2 years, depending on risk.*
- Take **medications** as prescribed by your doctor.
- Maintain an **active lifestyle** and **healthy weight**.

**Adapted from National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN) and American Cancer Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO).*

Note: For those diagnosed with early breast cancer, blood and imaging tests (other than mammograms) are not a standard part of follow-up care today.

Need to talk? Call 1-877 GO KOMEN (1-877-465-6636)

Call the Susan G. Komen Breast Care Helpline Monday through Friday from 9:00am to 10:00pm ET to speak with a trained and caring specialist who can help you with:

- additional information about these signs and symptoms
- questions to ask your doctor about these signs and symptoms or other concerns
- social and emotional support

Call 1-877-465-6636 or email helpline@komen.org. Se habla español.

If you feel worried, anxious or depressed, tell your doctor. Your doctor may refer you to a support group or counselor.

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