

BEL BREAST CANCER RESOURCE GUIDE

A Community-Centered Guide to Breast Health, Screening, Treatment, Support & Survivorship

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Breast cancer affects people across communities, but prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and survivorship are not experienced equally.

Black women continue to experience disproportionately high breast cancer mortality. According to the American Cancer Society, Black women are about **38% more likely to die from breast cancer than White women despite having slightly lower incidence rates**. Black women also experience higher rates of aggressive breast cancer subtypes, including triple-negative breast cancer.

For Black lesbians and other Black LGBTQ+ people, breast cancer care can also involve additional barriers, including discrimination, assumptions about sexual orientation or gender expression, difficulty finding culturally responsive providers, financial barriers, and feeling unseen in traditional cancer-support spaces.

BEL created this guide to provide practical information that can help community members:

- Understand breast cancer and breast health
 - Recognize possible warning signs
 - Learn about breast cancer screening
 - Understand personal and family risk
- Find LGBTQ+-affirming and culturally responsive care
 - Prepare for healthcare appointments
- Navigate an abnormal result or breast cancer diagnosis
 - Find financial and practical assistance
- Locate Black-centered and LGBTQ+-centered support
 - Access mental-health resources
 - Navigate treatment and survivorship
- Support someone diagnosed with breast cancer

This guide expands upon BEL's previous breast cancer resources, which addressed disparities, screening, culturally competent organizations, Georgia resources, financial support, affirming care, mental health, and survivorship.

1. UNDERSTANDING BREAST CANCER

Breast cancer develops when cells in breast tissue begin growing abnormally and uncontrollably.

Breast cancer is not one single disease. Different breast cancers can develop in different areas of the breast and have different biological characteristics. Those differences help healthcare professionals determine which treatments are most likely to work.

TERMS YOU MAY HEAR

Ductal Carcinoma in Situ (DCIS)

Abnormal cells are found inside a milk duct but have not spread into surrounding breast tissue. DCIS is considered non-invasive breast cancer.

Invasive Ductal Carcinoma

Cancer begins in a milk duct and has spread into surrounding breast tissue. It is the most common type of invasive breast cancer.

Invasive Lobular Carcinoma

Cancer begins in the milk-producing glands, called lobules, and spreads into nearby tissue.

Hormone Receptor-Positive Breast Cancer

The cancer has receptors for estrogen and/or progesterone. Hormone-blocking medications may be part of treatment.

HER2-Positive Breast Cancer

The cancer has increased levels of HER2, a protein that can promote cancer-cell growth. Treatments that specifically target HER2 may be used.

Triple-Negative Breast Cancer

Triple-negative breast cancer does not have estrogen receptors, progesterone receptors, or increased HER2 expression.

Triple-negative breast cancer is particularly important when discussing Black breast cancer disparities because Black women are diagnosed with this aggressive subtype at higher rates than White women.

Metastatic Breast Cancer

Metastatic breast cancer, also called Stage IV breast cancer, has spread beyond the breast and nearby lymph nodes to another part of the body.

Metastatic breast cancer is treatable, but it is currently considered incurable. Treatment generally focuses on controlling the cancer, extending life, reducing symptoms, and protecting quality of life.

2. KNOW YOUR BREASTS OR CHEST

You do not need to perform a formal monthly breast self-exam to pay attention to changes in your body.

Instead, become familiar with what is normal for your breasts or chest and report a new, unexplained, or persistent change to a healthcare professional.

The CDC identifies possible breast cancer symptoms including:

- A new lump in the breast or underarm
- Thickening or swelling in part of the breast
 - Dimpling or irritation of breast skin
- Redness or flaky skin around the nipple or breast
 - Nipple pulling inward
 - Nipple pain
- Nipple discharge other than breast milk, including blood
 - Changes in breast size or shape
 - Pain in any area of the breast

Not every breast or chest change is cancer. Many symptoms can have other causes.

However, a new or persistent change deserves medical evaluation.

IMPORTANT

If you find a lump, experience nipple discharge, develop a new skin change, or notice something that concerns you, **do not wait until your next routine mammogram** to seek medical attention.

3. SCREENING & EARLY DETECTION

Screening is testing for cancer before a person has symptoms.

WHAT IS A MAMMOGRAM?

A mammogram is an X-ray examination of breast tissue used to detect changes that may be too small to feel.

Both traditional digital mammography and 3D mammography, also called digital breast tomosynthesis, are used for breast cancer screening.

WHEN SHOULD SCREENING BEGIN?

Current U.S. Preventive Services Task Force guidance recommends **screening mammography every two years for women ages 40 through 74 who are at average risk**. This recommendation also applies to other people assigned female at birth who meet the relevant criteria.

Other professional organizations may recommend somewhat different screening schedules. Your healthcare provider can help determine the schedule that fits your individual health history and preferences.

YOU MAY NEED A DIFFERENT SCREENING PLAN IF YOU HAVE:

- A known BRCA1, BRCA2, or other high-risk genetic variant
 - A strong family history of breast or ovarian cancer
 - A personal history of breast cancer
 - Certain previous high-risk breast biopsy findings
- A history of high-dose radiation to the chest at a young age
- Other medical or genetic factors associated with higher breast cancer risk

People at higher risk may need earlier screening, more frequent screening, breast MRI, genetic counseling, or another individualized plan.

WHY EARLY DETECTION MATTERS

For breast cancer that is still localized to the breast when diagnosed, the five-year relative survival rate is greater than 99%. Survival is lower once cancer has spread regionally or to distant parts of the body. These statistics describe populations and cannot predict an individual person's outcome.

4. UNDERSTANDING YOUR PERSONAL RISK

No single factor determines whether someone will develop breast cancer.

Risk can be influenced by a combination of genetics, age, reproductive history, family history, prior medical treatment, lifestyle factors, and other health characteristics.

KNOW YOUR FAMILY HISTORY

Cancer history on **both sides of your biological family** may be relevant.

If possible, learn whether biological relatives have had:

- Breast cancer
- Ovarian cancer
- Pancreatic cancer
- Prostate cancer
- Male breast cancer
- Multiple cancers
- Cancer diagnosed at an unusually young age

Try to learn both **which relative had cancer and the approximate age at diagnosis**.

GENETIC COUNSELING

Genetic counseling can help determine whether genetic testing may be appropriate.

A genetic counselor can help you understand:

- What inherited cancer risk means
 - Whether testing is appropriate
- What different test results may mean
- How a result could affect screening or treatment
- Whether biological family members may also want testing

Having a family history of cancer does not automatically mean you carry a hereditary cancer-related genetic variant.

5. BLACK WOMEN & BREAST CANCER DISPARITIES

Breast cancer disparities are not simply about individual behavior.

The American Cancer Society reports that Black women are approximately **38% more likely to die from breast cancer than White women**, despite slightly lower breast cancer incidence.

Factors contributing to disparities can include:

- Differences in stage at diagnosis
- Higher incidence of aggressive cancer subtypes
 - Unequal access to timely screening
 - Delays in follow-up after abnormal results
- Differences in access to high-quality cancer treatment
 - Insurance and financial barriers
- Structural racism and discrimination within healthcare
 - Transportation and geographic barriers
- Differences in access to specialists and clinical trials

The goal is not to tell Black people to simply “do better” about screening.

Improving breast cancer outcomes also requires healthcare systems to provide **timely diagnosis, appropriate follow-up, equitable treatment, and high-quality care**. The USPSTF specifically notes that screening alone is insufficient to address the disparity in Black breast cancer mortality.

6. BLACK LESBIANS, LGBTQ+ PEOPLE & BREAST/CHEST CARE

Sexual orientation and gender presentation do not determine whether someone needs breast or chest healthcare.

Black lesbians, studs, stems, masculine-presenting lesbians, nonbinary people, and other LGBTQ+ community members may experience additional barriers when seeking breast healthcare.

These can include:

- Assumptions that all patients are heterosexual
- Questions framed around husbands or male partners
 - Misgendering
- Discomfort with heavily gendered breast-imaging environments
 - Lack of respect for masculine gender expression
 - Providers making assumptions about sexual practices
- Concern about how names and pronouns will be handled

- Previous discrimination in medical settings
- Avoiding healthcare because of past negative experiences

BEFORE SCHEDULING, YOU CAN ASK:

“Does your practice have experience caring for LGBTQ+ patients?”

“Does the breast center have experience working with masculine-presenting patients?”

“How are preferred names and pronouns documented?”

“Can I bring a support person?”

“Can the technologist explain each part of the mammogram before we begin?”

“What privacy accommodations are available when changing?”

“Who should I contact if I experience a problem during my visit?”

You deserve cancer prevention and treatment without having to hide who you are.

7. FINDING AN LGBTQ+ AFFIRMING PROVIDER

A provider using the words “LGBTQ friendly” does not automatically mean every patient will have an affirming experience.

Ask questions before scheduling when possible.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- Have you worked with LGBTQ+ patients?
- Have you worked with Black LGBTQ+ patients?
- Does the office document names and pronouns?
- How does the practice handle support people?
 - Is a patient navigator available?
- How are concerns or complaints handled?
- Will providers discuss care based on my actual medical history rather than assumptions about my identity?

PROVIDER DIRECTORIES

LGBTQ+ Healthcare Directory

Search for LGBTQ+-affirming health professionals.

Website:

<https://lgbtqhealthcaredirectory.org/>

OutCare OutList

Search for LGBTQ+-affirming providers by location and specialty.

Website:

<https://www.outcarehealth.org/provider-listing/>

GLMA

LGBTQ+ healthcare information and provider resources.

Website:

<https://www.glma.org/>

8. WHAT HAPPENS AFTER AN ABNORMAL MAMMOGRAM?

An abnormal mammogram does **not automatically mean breast cancer**.

Additional evaluation may include:

- Additional mammogram images
 - Ultrasound
 - Breast MRI
- Follow-up imaging after a period of time
 - Biopsy

A biopsy removes a small amount of tissue so it can be examined by a pathologist.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

“What exactly did the mammogram show?”

“Do I need additional imaging?”

“How soon should I have the next test?”

“Who will schedule it?”

“Do I need a biopsy?”

“When should I expect my results?”

“Who will explain the results to me?”

“If I don't hear from someone, who should I call?”

Do not assume that “no news is good news.” Make sure you know how and when results will be communicated.

9. IF YOU ARE DIAGNOSED WITH BREAST CANCER

A diagnosis may bring a large amount of information very quickly.

You do not have to understand everything at once.

Depending on your diagnosis, your treatment team may include:

Breast Surgeon

Performs breast surgery and discusses surgical options.

Medical Oncologist

Treats cancer with medications such as chemotherapy, hormone therapy, targeted therapy, and immunotherapy when appropriate.

Radiation Oncologist

Provides radiation therapy.

Plastic or Reconstructive Surgeon

Discusses breast reconstruction or other surgical options when appropriate.

Oncology Nurse or Nurse Navigator

Helps patients understand appointments, treatment, referrals, and resources.

Genetic Counselor

Evaluates inherited cancer risk and helps patients understand genetic testing.

Oncology Social Worker

Can help with emotional, financial, employment, transportation, caregiver, and practical needs.

Mental-Health Professional

Provides support for anxiety, depression, trauma, relationships, body image, grief, and other emotional concerns.

10. QUESTIONS TO ASK AFTER A DIAGNOSIS

Consider writing questions down or bringing someone who can take notes.

Ask:

“What type of breast cancer do I have?”

“What stage is it?”

“What do my estrogen receptor, progesterone receptor, and HER2 results mean?”

“Do I need any additional testing?”

“What are my treatment options?”

“What are the benefits and risks of each option?”

“How soon do I need to begin treatment?”

“Would getting a second opinion change anything about my care?”

“Should I consider genetic counseling or genetic testing?”

“Are clinical trials appropriate for me?”

“How could treatment affect fertility?”

“How could treatment affect sexual health or menopause?”

“What side effects should I expect?”

“Who do I contact if I develop symptoms between appointments?”

“Is a patient navigator or oncology social worker available?”

“What financial assistance is available?”

11. SECOND OPINIONS

You have the right to seek a second medical opinion.

A second opinion can be useful when:

- You want confirmation of a diagnosis
- You have several treatment options
- You have a rare or complicated cancer

- You want another specialist to review pathology or imaging
 - You want to explore a clinical trial
- You are uncertain about the recommended treatment plan

Seeking another opinion does not mean you distrust your healthcare team.

It is a normal part of making informed healthcare decisions.

12. MENTAL HEALTH & EMOTIONAL WELLNESS

Breast cancer is not only a physical illness.

A diagnosis and treatment can affect:

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Fear of death
- Fear of recurrence
 - Body image
 - Sexuality
 - Intimacy
- Relationships
 - Work
- Finances
- Fertility
- Identity
 - Grief
 - Fatigue
- Family roles
- Sense of control

Your first BEL guide correctly recognized fear, body-image changes, isolation, and relationship shifts as important parts of the cancer experience.

FOR BLACK LGBTQ+ PATIENTS

Cancer may intersect with identities and experiences that traditional cancer-support environments do not always understand.

For example, someone may experience:

- Discomfort with heavily gendered breast-cancer spaces
 - Changes in gender expression after surgery
- Complicated feelings about mastectomy or reconstruction
 - Sexual-health changes within same-sex relationships
- Isolation in predominantly heterosexual survivor groups
 - Racism in cancer care
 - Homophobia or identity-based assumptions
- Difficulty finding therapists who understand both Black and LGBTQ+ experiences

There is no single “correct” way to feel about your body, scars, breasts, chest, reconstruction, hair loss, treatment, or survivorship.

13. MENTAL HEALTH & SUPPORT RESOURCES

Cancer Support Community

Best for: People with cancer, survivors, caregivers, and loved ones seeking emotional support and navigation.

Cancer Support Community provides free cancer navigation, support groups, local referrals, emotional support, online support, and assistance finding transportation or lodging resources.

Cancer Support Helpline: 888-793-9355

Website:

<https://www.cancersupportcommunity.org/>

CancerCare

Best for: Counseling, support groups, cancer education, and practical resources.

CancerCare provides professional support for people affected by cancer, including counseling and educational services.

Website:

<https://www.cancercare.org/>

National Queer & Trans Therapists of Color Network

Best for: LGBTQ+ people of color seeking culturally responsive mental-health professionals.

Directory:

<https://nqttcn.com/directory/>

Therapy for Black Girls

Best for: Black women seeking culturally responsive mental health care.

Directory:

<https://providers.therapyforblackgirls.com/>

Inclusive Therapists

Best for: People looking for identity-affirming and culturally responsive therapists.

Website:

<https://www.inclusivetherapists.com/>

14. BLACK-CENTERED BREAST CANCER RESOURCES

Sisters Network® Inc.

Best for: Black breast cancer survivors, newly diagnosed patients, families, and Black communities.

Sisters Network is a national African American breast cancer survivorship organization. Its survivor-run chapters provide support, breast-health information, education, and community resources for Black women.

Services include:

- Survivor support
- Local chapters
- Breast-health education
- Community outreach
- Educational programming
- Breast cancer survivorship resources

Phone: 866-781-1808

Email: infonet@sistersnetwork.org

Website:

<https://www.sistersnetworkinc.org/>

Find a chapter:

<https://www.sistersnetworkinc.org/chapters/>

Tigerlily Foundation

Best for: Younger patients, people of color, metastatic breast cancer patients, and people seeking cancer education and advocacy resources.

Tigerlily Foundation provides education, empowerment, advocacy, peer navigation, clinical-trial education, metastatic breast cancer programming, and financial-support navigation. Its programs particularly focus on younger women and communities facing breast cancer disparities.

Resources include:

- Breast cancer education
- Triple-negative breast cancer resources
- Metastatic breast cancer resources
- Clinical-trial education
- Peer navigation
- Financial-support navigation
- Advocacy
- Caregiver resources

Website:

<https://tigerlilyfoundation.org/>

Programs:

<https://tigerlilyfoundation.org/programs/>

For the Breast of Us

Best for: Women of color affected by breast cancer.

For the Breast of Us provides representation, information, and community for women of color affected by breast cancer.

Website:

<https://breastofus.com/>

Black Women's Health Imperative

Best for: Broader Black women's health education and health-equity information.

Black Women's Health Imperative addresses health disparities and wellness issues affecting Black women.

Website:

<https://bwhi.org/>

15. LGBTQ+ CANCER RESOURCES

National LGBT Cancer Network

Best for: LGBTQ+ people affected by cancer, survivors, and people looking for LGBTQ+-specific cancer information.

The National LGBT Cancer Network focuses on improving cancer experiences and outcomes for LGBTQ+ communities.

Website:

<https://cancer-network.org/>

Young Survival Coalition

Best for: Young adults diagnosed with breast cancer.

Young Survival Coalition provides resources specifically for young adults affected by breast cancer, including newly diagnosed, metastatic, post-treatment, and long-term survivorship resources. It also offers virtual and in-person peer support.

Resources address:

- Fertility
- Sexuality and intimacy

- Financial and insurance issues
 - Metastatic breast cancer
 - Treatment
 - Survivorship
 - Mental health
 - Career concerns

Phone: 877-972-1011

Website:

<https://youngsurvival.org/>

16. BREAST CANCER INFORMATION & NAVIGATION

Susan G. Komen

Best for: Breast-health information, patient navigation, screening, diagnosis, treatment resources, and financial-assistance navigation.

The Susan G. Komen Patient Care Center can help patients and families understand breast health, treatment, resources, and available assistance.

Phone: 1-877-GO-KOMEN

1-877-465-6636

Website:

<https://www.komen.org/>

American Cancer Society

Best for: Cancer information, patient support, transportation resources, and navigation.

Cancer Helpline: 1-800-227-2345

Website:

<https://www.cancer.org/>

Breastcancer.org

Best for: Detailed information about diagnosis, pathology, treatments, side effects, genetics, recurrence, and survivorship.

Breastcancer.org maintains updated educational material about breast cancer diagnosis and treatment.

Website:

<https://www.breastcancer.org/>

Living Beyond Breast Cancer

Best for: People navigating diagnosis, treatment, metastatic breast cancer, and survivorship.

Website:

<https://www.lbbc.org/>

National Breast Cancer Foundation

Best for: Breast-health education, patient navigation, screening information, and support.

Website:

<https://www.nationalbreastcancer.org/>

17. METASTATIC BREAST CANCER RESOURCES

METAvivor

Best for: People living with metastatic breast cancer and people looking for metastatic-specific research, education, and advocacy.

Website:

<https://www.metavivor.org/>

Young Survival Coalition

Young adults living with metastatic breast cancer can access specialized resources and peer support through YSC.

Website:

<https://youngsurvival.org/>

Tigerlily Foundation

Tigerlily provides metastatic breast cancer education and programs, including its MY LIFE program.

Website:

<https://tigerlilyfoundation.org/>

18. FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Cancer can create financial hardship far beyond medical bills.

Costs may include:

- Rent or mortgage
 - Utilities
 - Food
- Transportation
 - Childcare
 - Lost wages
- Insurance premiums
 - Lodging
 - Medication
 - Parking
 - Travel
- Household expenses

Your original BEL guide appropriately identified missing work, paying bills, and transportation as major barriers during cancer treatment.

Patient Advocate Foundation

Best for: Insurance problems, healthcare access, case management, financial resources, and serious-illness navigation.

Patient Advocate Foundation provides case-management services and financial-aid resources to people with chronic, life-threatening, and debilitating illnesses.

Phone: 800-532-5274

Website:

<https://www.patientadvocate.org/>

Financial Resource Directory:

<https://www.patientadvocate.org/explore-our-resources/national-financial-resource-directory/>

Important: Individual financial-aid funds have eligibility requirements and may open or close as funding changes.

Family Reach

Best for: Everyday expenses affected by cancer.

Family Reach helps people identify resources for:

- Housing
- Rent or mortgage
- Utilities
- Food
- Transportation
- Medical bills
- Financial navigation

Its Financial Resource Center is available nationally, and certain direct-assistance funds may also be available depending on current funding.

Phone: 973-394-1411

Website:

<https://familyreach.org/>

Financial Resource Center:

<https://familyreach.org/get-help/financial-resource-center/>

The Pink Fund

Best for: Eligible breast cancer patients experiencing financial hardship during treatment.

The Pink Fund focuses on non-medical financial burdens associated with breast cancer.

Website:

<https://pinkfund.org/>

Because eligibility and available funding can change, check the current website before applying.

19. TRANSPORTATION TO CANCER CARE

American Cancer Society Road To Recovery®

Best for: People who need transportation to cancer-related medical appointments.

Road To Recovery provides free transportation to eligible cancer-related appointments when volunteer drivers and services are available locally.

Phone: 1-800-227-2345

Website:

<https://www.cancer.org/support-programs-and-services/road-to-recovery.html>

Availability varies by location.

20. LODGING DURING CANCER TREATMENT

Healthcare Hospitality Network

Best for: Patients and caregivers traveling away from home for medical care.

Healthcare Hospitality Network connects people with nonprofit hospitality houses. Many provide lodging at little or no cost, although eligibility and availability vary by facility.

Website:

<https://www.hhnetwork.org/>

Joe's House

Best for: Cancer patients and families looking for lodging near treatment centers.

Website:

<https://www.joeshouse.org/>

21. FREE & LOW-COST BREAST CANCER SCREENING

CDC National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program

Best for: People with low incomes who are uninsured or underinsured and may qualify for breast or cervical cancer screening.

The CDC's National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program funds screening, diagnostic, and treatment-access programs across the United States.

Website:

<https://www.cdc.gov/breast-cervical-cancer-screening/>

Use the website to locate your state's screening program.

22. GEORGIA BREAST CANCER RESOURCES

Georgia Breast and Cervical Cancer Program

Best for: Eligible uninsured or underinsured Georgia residents seeking screening and diagnostic services.

Georgia's Breast and Cervical Cancer Program provides breast cancer screening and diagnostic services at no or low cost for eligible residents.

As of 2026, Georgia lists the following general breast-services eligibility:

- Georgia residency
- Meeting income criteria
- Uninsured or underinsured
- Ages 40–64 for breast screening services

Services can include:

- Mammography
- Clinical breast examination
- Diagnostic services
- Patient navigation
- Referrals
- Certain genetic services

Website:

<https://dph.georgia.gov/BCCP>

To determine eligibility, contact your local county health department.

Grady Comprehensive Breast Center

Best for: Atlanta-area breast imaging, diagnostic care, and breast cancer treatment.

Grady provides:

- Mammography
- 3D mammography
 - Breast MRI
- Image-guided biopsy
 - Breast surgery
 - Oncology
 - Genetics
 - Pathology
- Reconstruction

Grady also participates in Georgia's Breast and Cervical Cancer Program.

BCCP Eligibility Assistance:

404-489-9000

Grady Main Number:

404-616-1000

Website:

<https://www.gradyhealth.org/services/cancer-breast-center-cancer-center/>

23. SURVIVORSHIP

Cancer survivorship can begin at diagnosis and continue through treatment and beyond.

Survivorship does not simply mean “being finished with cancer.”

People may continue to manage:

- Follow-up appointments
- Long-term medication
 - Fatigue
- Lymphedema
- Neuropathy

- Menopause
- Fertility concerns
- Sexual-health changes
- Body-image changes
 - Scars
- Fear of recurrence
- Financial recovery
 - Work changes
- Relationship changes
- Anxiety and depression

Ask your cancer team whether you should receive a **survivorship care plan** describing your treatment history, follow-up needs, and potential long-term effects.

Young Survival Coalition provides post-treatment and long-term survivorship tools, including resources addressing sex and intimacy, fertility, side effects, and survivorship planning.

REMEMBER

You do not have to be positive every day.

You do not have to describe cancer as a blessing.

You do not have to call yourself a survivor if that language doesn't fit you.

Your experience belongs to you.

24. BODY IMAGE, GENDER EXPRESSION & RECONSTRUCTION

Breast cancer treatment can affect the body in ways that feel complicated.

Some people may want breast reconstruction.

Some may not.

Some may feel grief about losing one or both breasts.

Others may feel differently about having a flatter chest.

Some masculine-presenting lesbians may experience changes in appearance differently than feminine-presenting patients.

There is no single LGBTQ+ experience of mastectomy, lumpectomy, reconstruction, or scarring.

Ask your healthcare team about:

- Lumpectomy
- Mastectomy
- Reconstruction
 - Going flat
 - Prostheses
 - Scar care
- Sexual-health changes
- Body-image support

Your treatment decisions should reflect your medical needs, values, preferences, and informed consent—not assumptions about how a woman or lesbian “should” feel about her breasts.

25. SEXUAL HEALTH & INTIMACY AFTER BREAST CANCER

Cancer and treatment can affect:

- Sexual desire
- Vaginal dryness
- Menopause symptoms
 - Pain
 - Fatigue
- Body confidence
- Sensation after breast surgery
 - Relationships
- Communication with partners

These issues are legitimate healthcare concerns.

You can ask your oncologist, gynecologist, primary-care provider, or another qualified clinician about sexual side effects and treatment options.

Partners can also experience fear, uncertainty, and changes in intimacy.

Open communication may help couples adjust together.

26. SUPPORTING SOMEONE WITH BREAST CANCER

People often say:

“Let me know if you need anything.”

That places the responsibility on the person with cancer to figure out what to ask for.

Try offering something specific instead.

SAY:

“I can bring dinner Tuesday or Thursday. Which day works?”

“I can drive you to your appointment.”

“I can sit with you during treatment.”

“I can take notes during your appointment.”

“I can pick up groceries.”

“I can help you organize bills or financial-assistance applications.”

“I can check in without expecting you to respond.”

“I can just sit with you.”

RESPECT PRIVACY

A person's cancer diagnosis belongs to them.

Do not share their diagnosis, treatment details, photos, or medical information with others without permission.

27. ADVOCATING FOR YOURSELF

You have the right to:

- Ask questions
- Understand why a test is being recommended
 - Ask for information in plain language
- Bring someone to appointments when permitted
 - Request your records
- Get copies of pathology and imaging reports
 - Seek a second opinion

- Ask about alternatives
- Ask about clinical trials
- Request an interpreter or accessibility support
 - Ask for a patient navigator
- Ask to speak with an oncology social worker
 - Report discrimination or disrespect

If something does not make sense, ask again.

You are not being difficult by wanting to understand your care.

28. AFTER AN APPOINTMENT: CHECK IN WITH YOURSELF

Ask:

Did I feel heard?

Did I feel believed?

Did I feel respected?

Did I feel supported?

Were my questions answered?

Were assumptions made about me?

Did I feel safe correcting the provider?

Were my boundaries respected?

Do I understand what happens next?

Would I feel comfortable returning?

29. CRISIS SUPPORT

A cancer diagnosis can sometimes become emotionally overwhelming.

If you or someone you know is experiencing a mental-health or suicide crisis in the United States:

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

Call or text: 988

Website:

<https://988lifeline.org/>

If there is an immediate medical emergency or immediate danger, call **911** or seek emergency medical care.

30. QUICK RESOURCE DIRECTORY

Black-Centered Support

Sisters Network Inc.

<https://www.sistersnetworkinc.org/>

Tigerlily Foundation

<https://tigerlilyfoundation.org/>

For the Breast of Us

<https://breastofus.com/>

Black Women's Health Imperative

<https://bwhi.org/>

LGBTQ+ Cancer & Healthcare

National LGBT Cancer Network

<https://cancer-network.org/>

LGBTQ+ Healthcare Directory

<https://lgbtqhealthcaredirectory.org/>

OutCare OutList

<https://www.outcarehealth.org/provider-listing/>

Breast Cancer Information

American Cancer Society

<https://www.cancer.org/>

Susan G. Komen

<https://www.komen.org/>

Breastcancer.org

<https://www.breastcancer.org/>

Living Beyond Breast Cancer

<https://www.lbbc.org/>

National Breast Cancer Foundation

<https://www.nationalbreastcancer.org/>

Young Adults

Young Survival Coalition

<https://youngsurvival.org/>

Metastatic Breast Cancer

METAvivor

<https://www.metavivor.org/>

Mental Health & Emotional Support

Cancer Support Community

<https://www.cancersupportcommunity.org/>

CancerCare

<https://www.cancercare.org/>

NQTTN Therapist Directory

<https://nqttcn.com/directory/>

Therapy for Black Girls

<https://providers.therapyforblackgirls.com/>

Inclusive Therapists

<https://www.inclusivetherapists.com/>

Financial Assistance

Patient Advocate Foundation

<https://www.patientadvocate.org/>

Family Reach

<https://familyreach.org/>

The Pink Fund

<https://pinkfund.org/>

Transportation

American Cancer Society Road To Recovery

<https://www.cancer.org/support-programs-and-services/road-to-recovery.html>

Lodging

Healthcare Hospitality Network

<https://www.hhnetwork.org/>

Joe's House

<https://www.joeshouse.org/>

Free or Low-Cost Screening

CDC National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program

<https://www.cdc.gov/breast-cervical-cancer-screening/>

Georgia Breast and Cervical Cancer Program

<https://dph.georgia.gov/BCCP>

Atlanta

Grady Comprehensive Breast Center

<https://www.gradyhealth.org/services/cancer-breast-center-cancer-center/>

31. A NOTE ABOUT RESOURCE ELIGIBILITY

Programs, eligibility requirements, funding availability, phone numbers, and services can change.

Before relying on a program, visit the organization's website or contact the organization directly for the most current information.

Inclusion in this guide does not mean that Black Educated Lesbians has independently evaluated or endorsed every organization, healthcare professional, treatment, or service listed.

32. IMPORTANT MEDICAL DISCLAIMER

This guide is for **education and resource navigation only**.

Black Educated Lesbians does not diagnose medical or mental-health conditions, provide individualized medical advice, determine cancer risk, recommend specific treatments, or guarantee the quality of any healthcare professional or organization listed.

Screening and treatment decisions should be made with qualified healthcare professionals based on your individual health history, age, symptoms, risk factors, anatomy, family history, and preferences.

If you have a new or concerning breast/chest symptom, contact a healthcare professional rather than relying only on this guide.

33. ABOUT BLACK EDUCATED LESBIANS

Black Educated Lesbians (BEL) is a Black lesbian-led nonprofit organization committed to advancing wellness, education, leadership, research, and community among Black lesbians and Black queer women.

BEL's health and wellness work recognizes that our communities need more than awareness.

We need information we can use.

We need culturally relevant resources.

We need affirming care.

We need spaces where Black lesbian experiences are not treated as an afterthought.

Through community education, wellness programming, research, resource development, and partnerships, BEL works to strengthen access to the information and support our community needs.

NEED HELP FINDING A RESOURCE?

If you cannot find a resource or believe BEL should add an organization to this guide, contact us.

Black Educated Lesbians (BEL)

Email: admin@blackeducatedlesbians.com

Website: <https://blackeducatedlesbians.com/>

Instagram & Facebook: @black.educated.lesbians

BEL Community Resource Library

<https://blackeducatedlesbians.com/bel-resource-guides>

YOUR HEALTH DESERVES ATTENTION.

Your questions deserve answers.

Your identity deserves respect.

Your care should not require you to become invisible.

And your life is worth advocating for.

**Black Educated Lesbians
United in Power, Purpose, and Pride.**