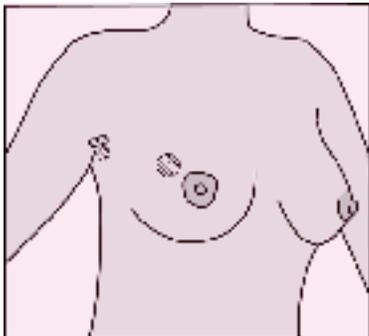


The goal of breast cancer surgery is to remove the tumor from the breast. Some lymph nodes from the underarm may also be removed.

Surgery is almost always combined with other types of treatment such as radiation therapy, chemotherapy, hormone and targeted therapy. This helps to increase survival.

**Lumpectomy (almost always followed by radiation therapy):**



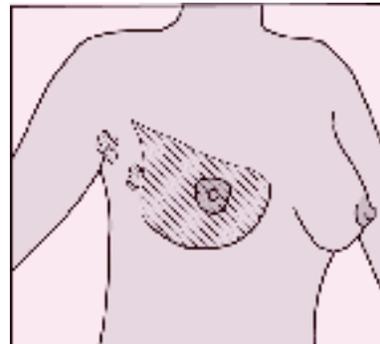
The surgeon removes the breast tumor, some normal tissue around it and usually some lymph nodes in the underarm.

**Types of breast cancer surgery**

There are two main types of breast cancer surgery: lumpectomy (breast conserving surgery) and mastectomy. With lumpectomy, the surgeon tries to spare as much of the breast tissue as possible. With a mastectomy, the entire breast is removed.

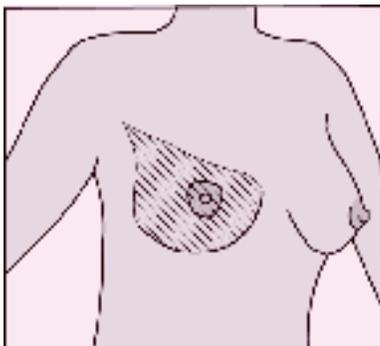
Research has shown lumpectomy plus radiation therapy offers the same overall survival benefit as mastectomy for early stage breast cancer.

**Modified radical mastectomy:**



The surgeon removes the breast, the lining of the chest muscles and some of the lymph nodes in the underarm.

**Total mastectomy:**



The surgeon removes the entire breast, but no other tissues or nodes.

**Nipple-sparing mastectomy:**

The surgeon removes the tumor and healthy tissue around it, as well as the fat and other tissue in the breast. This leaves the nipple and areola intact.

**Skin-sparing mastectomy:**

The surgeon removes the tumor and healthy tissue around it, as well as the nipple, fat and other tissue in the breast.

Nipple and skin-sparing mastectomies are not common and may not be an option for all patients.

## Which surgery is best for you?

- Ask your doctor to suggest a few surgeons for you. Find out more about their qualifications and experience. Choose a surgeon who does a lot of breast cancer surgeries.
- Ask your surgeon which options are best for you and why. You may want to get a second opinion.
- Think about what treatments you are willing to have. For example, if driving for daily radiation therapy is not possible, then a lumpectomy may not be the best option for you.

## You are not alone

If you need breast cancer surgery, remember there are many women who have been where you are today. They had the same fears and made the same tough choices. These women have gone through surgery, recovered and are living their lives. They may be willing to talk to you and answer questions.

You can find survivors on the message boards on [www.komen.org](http://www.komen.org) or in groups like American Cancer Society's Reach to Recovery program. Ask a member of your health care team (doctors, nurses or social workers) how to find a support group. You may also be able to find them online.

## What to expect after surgery

Before surgery, ask your doctor what changes you might expect afterwards. These may include:

- Risk of infection, bleeding or slow healing of the wound. If lymph nodes have been removed, you may have a collection of fluid under your skin. This can cause tingling, numbness, stiffness, pain, weakness or swelling in your arm. (Some women do not have any of these symptoms).
- Side effects, such as soreness of chest, underarm and shoulder may occur. But, they should go away. Physical therapy may help. The therapist will suggest exercises to help regain movement and strength in your arm. If the after-effects of surgery remain, be sure to tell your doctor.

In the end, only a scar should remain. Resume your normal activities as you feel better and as prescribed by your doctor.

## Resources

Susan G. Komen®  
1-877 GO KOMEN (1-877-465-6636), [www.komen.org](http://www.komen.org)

American Cancer Society — Reach to Recovery  
1-800-ACS-2345, [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)

American Society of Breast Surgeons  
1-877-992-5470, [www.breastsurgeons.org](http://www.breastsurgeons.org)

American Society of Plastic Surgeons  
1-847-228-9900, [www.plasticsurgery.org](http://www.plasticsurgery.org)

### Related fact sheets in this series:

- Axillary Lymph Nodes
- Breast Reconstruction & Prosthesis
- Chemotherapy and Side Effects
- Radiation Therapy and Side Effects

The above list of resources is only a suggested resource and is not a complete listing of breast cancer materials or information. The information contained herein is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or to replace the services of a medical professional. Komen does not endorse, recommend or make any warranties or representations regarding the accuracy, completeness, timeliness, quality or non-infringement of any of the materials, products or information provided by the organizations referenced herein.