

Glossary

Advanced cancer: Cancer that has spread to other places in the body and usually cannot be cured or controlled with treatment.

Aromatase inhibitor (uh-ROH-muh-tayz in-HIH-bih-ter): A drug that prevents the formation of estradiol, a female hormone, by interfering with an aromatase enzyme. Aromatase inhibitors are used as a type of hormone therapy for postmenopausal women who have hormone-dependent breast cancer.

Axilla (ak-SIL-a): The underarm or armpit.

Axillary dissection (AK-sih-LAYR-ee dy-SEK-shun): Surgery to remove lymph nodes found in the armpit region. Also called axillary lymph node dissection.

Axillary lymph node (AK-sih-LAYR-ee limf): A lymph node in the armpit region that drains lymph from the breast and nearby areas.

Benign (beh-NINE): Not cancer. Benign tumors may grow larger but do not spread to other parts of the body.

Biopsy (BY-op-see): The removal of cells or tissues for examination by a pathologist. The pathologist may study the tissue under a microscope or perform other tests on the cells or tissue.

Blood vessel: A tube through which the blood circulates in the body. Blood vessels include a network of arteries, arterioles, capillaries, venules, and veins.

Brachytherapy (BRAY-kee-THAYR-uh-pee): A type of radiation therapy in which radioactive material sealed in needles, seeds, wires, or catheters is placed directly into or near a tumor. Also called implant radiation therapy, internal radiation therapy, and radiation brachytherapy.

Breast-sparing surgery (SER-juh-ree): An operation to remove the breast cancer but not the breast itself. Types of breast-sparing surgery include lumpectomy (removal of the lump), quadrantectomy (removal of one quarter, or quadrant, of the breast), and segmental mastectomy (removal of the cancer as well as some of the breast tissue around the tumor and the lining over the chest muscles below the tumor). Also called breast-conserving surgery.

Cancer (KAN-ser): A term for diseases in which abnormal cells divide without control and can invade nearby tissues. Cancer cells can also spread to other parts of the body through the blood and lymph systems.

Carcinoma in situ (KAR-sih-NOH-muh in SY-too): A group of abnormal cells that remain in the place where they first formed. They have not spread. These abnormal cells may become cancer and spread into nearby normal tissue. Also called stage 0 disease.

Cell: The individual unit that makes up the tissues of the body. All living things are made up of one or more cells.

Chemotherapy (KEE-moh-THAYR-uh-pee): Treatment with drugs that kill cancer cells.

Clinical trial: A type of research study that tests how well new medical approaches work in people. These studies test new methods of screening, prevention, diagnosis, or treatment of a disease. Also called clinical study.

Contrast material: A dye or other substance that helps show abnormal areas inside the body. It is given by injection into a vein, by enema, or by mouth. Contrast material may be used with x-rays, CT scans, MRI, or other imaging tests.

CT scan: A series of detailed pictures of areas inside the body taken from different angles. The pictures are created by a computer linked to an x-ray machine. Also called CAT scan, computed tomography scan, computerized axial tomography scan, and computerized tomography.

Duct (duit): In medicine, a tube or vessel of the body through which fluids pass.

Ductal carcinoma (DUK-tul KAR-sih-NOH-muh): The most common type of breast cancer. It begins in the cells that line the milk ducts in the breast.

Ductal carcinoma in situ (DUK-tal KAR-sih-NOH-muh in SYE-too): A noninvasive condition in which abnormal cells are found in the lining of a breast duct. The abnormal cells have not spread outside the duct to other tissues in the breast. In some cases, ductal carcinoma in situ may become invasive cancer and spread to other tissues, although it is not known at this time how to predict which lesions will become invasive. Also called DCIS and intraductal carcinoma.

Early-stage breast cancer: Breast cancer that has not spread beyond the breast or the axillary lymph nodes. This includes ductal carcinoma in situ and stage I, stage IIA, stage IIB, and stage IIIA breast cancers.

Estrogen (ES-truh-jin): A type of hormone made by the body that helps develop and maintain female sex characteristics and the

growth of long bones. Estrogens can also be made in the laboratory. They may be used as a type of birth control and to treat symptoms of menopause, menstrual disorders, osteoporosis, and other conditions.

External radiation therapy (RAY-dee-AY-shun THAYR-uh-pee): A type of radiation therapy that uses a machine to aim high-energy rays at the cancer from outside of the body. Also called external-beam radiation therapy.

Fibrous: Containing or resembling fibers.

Gland: An organ that makes one or more substances, such as hormones, digestive juices, sweat, tears, saliva, or milk.

HER2: A protein involved in normal cell growth. It is found on some types of cancer cells, including breast and ovarian. Cancer cells removed from the body may be tested for the presence of HER2/neu to help decide the best type of treatment. Also called c-erbB-2, human EGF receptor 2, and human epidermal growth factor receptor 2.

Hormone receptor (HOR-mone reh-SEP-ter): A cell protein that binds a specific hormone. The hormone receptor may be on the surface of the cell or inside the cell. Many changes take place in a cell after a hormone binds to its receptor.

Hormone therapy (HOR-mone THAYR-uh-pee): Treatment that adds, blocks, or removes hormones. For certain conditions (such as diabetes or menopause), hormones are given to adjust low hormone levels. To slow or stop the growth of certain cancers (such as prostate and breast cancer), synthetic hormones or other drugs may be given to block the body's natural hormones. Sometimes surgery is needed to remove the gland that makes a certain hormone. Also called endocrine therapy, hormonal therapy, and hormone treatment.

Inflammatory breast cancer (in-FLA-muh-TOR-ee): A type of breast cancer in which the breast looks red and swollen and feels warm. The skin of the breast may also show the pitted appearance called peau d'orange (like the skin of an orange). The redness and warmth occur because the cancer cells block the lymph vessels in the skin.

Intravenous (IN-truh-VEE-nus): Into or within a vein. Intravenous usually refers to a way of giving a drug or other substance through a needle or tube inserted into a vein. Also called IV.

Leukemia (loo-KEE-mee-uh): Cancer that starts in blood-forming tissue such as the bone marrow and causes large numbers of blood cells to be produced and enter the bloodstream.

LH-RH agonist: A drug that inhibits the secretion of sex hormones. In men, LH-RH agonist causes testosterone levels to fall. In women, LH-RH agonist causes the levels of estrogen and other sex hormones to fall. Also called luteinizing hormone-releasing hormone

agonist.

Lobe: A portion of an organ, such as the liver, lung, breast, thyroid, or brain.

Lobular carcinoma (LAH-byuh-ler KAR-sih-NOH-muh): Cancer that begins in the lobules (the glands that make milk) of the breast. Lobular carcinoma in situ (LCIS) is a condition in which abnormal cells are found only in the lobules. When cancer has spread from the lobules to surrounding tissues, it is invasive lobular carcinoma. LCIS does not become invasive lobular carcinoma very often, but having LCIS in one breast increases the risk of developing invasive cancer in either breast.

Lobule (LOB-yule): A small lobe or a subdivision of a lobe.

Lumpectomy (lum-PEK-toh-mee): Surgery to remove abnormal tissue or cancer from the breast and a small amount of normal tissue around it. It is a type of breast-sparing surgery.

Lymph node (limf): A rounded mass of lymphatic tissue that is surrounded by a capsule of connective tissue. Lymph nodes filter lymph (lymphatic fluid), and they store lymphocytes (white blood cells). They are located along lymphatic vessels. Also called lymph gland.

Lymph vessel (limf): A thin tube that carries lymph (lymphatic fluid) and white blood cells through the lymphatic system. Also called lymphatic vessel.

Lymphedema (LIM-fuh-DEE-muh): A condition in which excess fluid collects in tissue and causes swelling. It may occur in the arm or leg after lymph vessels or lymph nodes in the underarm or groin are removed or treated with radiation.

Malignant (muh-LIG-nunt): Cancerous. Malignant tumors can invade and destroy nearby tissue and spread to other parts of the body.

Mammogram (MAM-o-gram): An x-ray of the breast.

Mastectomy (ma-STEK-toh-mee): Surgery to remove the breast (or as much of the breast tissue as possible).

Medical oncologist (MEH-dih-kul on-KAH-loh-jist): A doctor who specializes in diagnosing and treating cancer using chemotherapy, targeted therapy, hormonal therapy, and biological therapy. A medical oncologist often is the main health care provider for someone who has cancer. A medical oncologist also gives supportive care and may coordinate treatment given by other specialists.

Menopause (MEH-nuh-PAWZ): The time of life when a woman's ovaries stop working and menstrual periods stop. Natural menopause

usually occurs around age 50. A woman is said to be in menopause when she hasn't had a period for 12 months in a row. Symptoms of menopause include hot flashes, mood swings, night sweats, vaginal dryness, trouble concentrating, and infertility.

Menstrual period (MEN-stroo-al): The periodic discharge of blood and tissue from the uterus. From puberty until menopause, menstruation occurs about every 28 days, but does not occur during pregnancy.

Metastatic (meh-tuh-STA-tik): Having to do with metastasis, which is the spread of cancer from one part of the body to another.

Modified radical mastectomy (RA-dih-kul ma-STEK-toh-mee): Surgery for breast cancer in which the breast, most or all of the lymph nodes under the arm, and the lining over the chest muscles are removed. Sometimes the surgeon also removes part of the chest wall muscles.

MRI: A procedure in which radio waves and a powerful magnet linked to a computer are used to create detailed pictures of areas inside the body. These pictures can show the difference between normal and diseased tissue. MRI makes better images of organs and soft tissue than other scanning techniques, such as computed tomography (CT) or x-ray. MRI is especially useful for imaging the brain, the spine, the soft tissue of joints, and the inside of bones. Also called magnetic resonance imaging.

Oncology nurse (on-KAH-loh-jee): A nurse who specializes in treating and caring for people who have cancer.

Organ: A part of the body that performs a specific function. For example, the heart is an organ.

Ovary (OH-vuh-ree): One of a pair of female reproductive glands in which the ova, or eggs, are formed. The ovaries are located in the pelvis, one on each side of the uterus.

Partial mastectomy (ma-STEK-toh-mee): The removal of cancer as well as some of the breast tissue around the tumor and the lining over the chest muscles below the tumor. Usually some of the lymph nodes under the arm are also taken out. Also called segmental mastectomy.

PET scan: A procedure in which a small amount of radioactive glucose (sugar) is injected into a vein, and a scanner is used to make detailed, computerized pictures of areas inside the body where the glucose is used. Because cancer cells often use more glucose than normal cells, the pictures can be used to find cancer cells in the body. Also called positron emission tomography scan.

Physical therapist: A health professional who teaches exercises and physical activities that help condition muscles and restore strength and movement.

Plastic surgeon (SER-jun): A surgeon who specializes in reducing scarring or disfigurement that may occur as a result of accidents, birth defects, or treatment for diseases.

Plastic surgery (SER-juh-ree): An operation that restores or improves the appearance of body structures.

Progesterone (proh-JES-tuh-RONE): A type of hormone made by the body that plays a role in the menstrual cycle and pregnancy. Progesterone can also be made in the laboratory. It may be used as a type of birth control and to treat menstrual disorders, infertility, symptoms of menopause, and other conditions.

Radiation (RAY-dee-AY-shun): Energy released in the form of particle or electromagnetic waves. Common sources of radiation include radon gas, cosmic rays from outer space, medical x-rays, and energy given off by a radioisotope (unstable form of a chemical element that releases radiation as it breaks down and becomes more stable).

Radiation oncologist (RAY-dee-AY-shun on-KAH-loh-jist): A doctor who specializes in using radiation to treat cancer.

Radiation therapy (RAY-dee-AY-shun THAYR-uh-pee): The use of high-energy radiation from x-rays, gamma rays, neutrons, protons, and other sources to kill cancer cells and shrink tumors. Radiation may come from a machine outside the body (external-beam radiation therapy), or it may come from radioactive material placed in the body near cancer cells (internal radiation therapy). Systemic radiation therapy uses a radioactive substance, such as a radiolabeled monoclonal antibody, that travels in the blood to tissues throughout the body. Also called irradiation and radiotherapy.

Radioactive (RAY-dee-oh-AK-tiv): Giving off radiation.

Reconstructive surgeon (REE-kun-STRUK-tiv SER-jun): A doctor who can surgically reshape or rebuild (reconstruct) a part of the body, such as a woman's breast after surgery for breast cancer.

Registered dietitian (dy-eh-TIH-shun): A health professional with special training in the use of diet and nutrition to keep the body healthy. A registered dietitian may help the medical team improve the nutritional health of a patient.

Segmental mastectomy (seg-MEN-tul ma-STEK-toh-mee): The removal of cancer as well as some of the breast tissue around the tumor and the lining over the chest muscles below the tumor. Usually some of the lymph nodes under the arm are also taken out. Also called partial mastectomy.

Sentinel lymph node biopsy: Removal and examination of the sentinel node(s) (the first lymph node(s) to which cancer cells are likely to spread from a primary tumor). To identify the sentinel lymph node(s), the surgeon injects a radioactive substance, blue dye, or both near the tumor. The surgeon then uses a scanner to find the sentinel lymph node(s) containing the radioactive substance or looks for the lymph node(s) stained with dye. The surgeon then removes the sentinel node(s) to check for the presence of cancer cells.

Side effect: A problem that occurs when treatment affects healthy tissues or organs. Some common side effects of cancer treatment are fatigue, pain, nausea, vomiting, decreased blood cell counts, hair loss, and mouth sores.

Social worker: A professional trained to talk with people and their families about emotional or physical needs, and to find them support services.

Surgery (SER-juh-ree): A procedure to remove or repair a part of the body or to find out whether disease is present. An operation.

Tamoxifen (tuh-MOK-sih-FEN): A drug used to treat certain types of breast cancer in women and men. It is also used to prevent breast cancer in women who have had ductal carcinoma in situ (abnormal cells in the ducts of the breast) and in women who are at a high risk of developing breast cancer. It blocks the effects of the hormone estrogen in the breast.

Targeted therapy (TAR-geh-ted THAYR-uh-pee): A type of treatment that uses drugs or other substances, such as monoclonal antibodies, to identify and attack specific cancer cells. Targeted therapy may have fewer side effects than other types of cancer treatments.

Tissue (TISH-oo): A group or layer of cells that work together to perform a specific function.

Total mastectomy (ma-STEK-toh-mee): Removal of the breast. Also called simple mastectomy.

Tumor (TOO-mer): An abnormal mass of tissue that results when cells divide more than they should or do not die when they should. Tumors may be benign (not cancer), or malignant (cancer). Also called neoplasm.

X-ray: A type of high-energy radiation. In low doses, x-rays are used to diagnose diseases by making pictures of the inside of the body. In high doses, x-rays are used to treat cancer.