Information following discharge
We hope that this information will be useful to you following your discharge from surgical follow-up. It explains ways in which you can continue to access support and advice about your health.

If you have any concerns or questions that are not covered in this leaflet, please speak to your Breast Care Nurse.

What is patient initiated follow-up?
Patient initiated follow-up puts the patient in control. You can make an appointment to see us if you have any worries or concerns rather than having a regular clinic visit.

Research has shown that having a regular outpatient follow-up does not help prevent cancer returning or identify any new problems, and many patients find the follow-up visits to the hospital cause a lot of anxiety.

What support can my Breast Care Nurse offer me?
Your Breast Care Nurse will be known to you since your diagnosis of breast cancer. All patients will have access to the specialist advice, support and information that a Breast Care Nurse can offer. The Breast Care Nurse is available at any point in your care including this period following your discharge from regular hospital follow-up.

If you have any concerns about any new symptoms, prosthesis advice, or to discuss delayed breast reconstruction or need advice or support contact your Breast Care Nurse on the number at the back of this leaflet.

Symptoms you may want to report
Many patients ask what symptoms they should report to us. The majority of patients have no further problems after they complete their treatment, and live to an old age without any cancer-related problems.

The following guide may help you with what symptoms to seek further advice about. If you have any of the following symptoms for more than 3 weeks which are getting worse rather than better please contact your Breast Care Nurse:

- New changes in your breast/breasts e.g. lumps or skin nodules.
- Swelling on the arm/hand on the side of breast cancer.
- Lumps around the collar bone, neck or armpit.
- Unexpected vaginal bleeding or spotting (if on hormonal treatment).
- Persistent back or bone pain which wakes you up at night, unrelieved with regular painkillers.
- A dry cough or a feeling of breathlessness.
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Your feelings
Everyone will have different feelings when they no longer need to be seen regularly by their medical team. Some people feel relieved that they can now start getting their lives back to normal.

Others maybe concerned about what can happen in the future and are anxious about losing contact with the hospital.

Most people worry about the cancer coming back. This is perfectly normal and usually lessens with time.

If you are finding moving on difficult you may want to talk to someone about your feelings. This could be your Breast Care Nurse, GP, or if needed a one to one support or counselling can be arranged.

You can talk to someone who has been through a similar experience through the Breast Cancer Peer Support Service, or a local support group. Your Breast Care Nurse will be able to provide you with these contact details.

Breast awareness and follow-up mammograms
Following your treatment you will be invited to have a regular mammogram (breast x-ray). If you have had a mastectomy a mammogram will be done on your other breast. After breast conserving surgery (lumpectomy or wide local excision) you will have mammograms on both breasts.

It is important to remain breast aware after your treatment. Being breast aware means knowing how your breasts look and feel. If you notice any changes that aren’t normal for you please contact your Breast Care Nurse.

Mammograms
You will be offered a follow up mammogram each year for the next 5-6 years after your diagnosis of breast cancer. This is to check that your breast tissue is normal. Your mammogram appointment will be in the same month each year.

If you receive an invitation to attend a screening mammogram during the first 5 - 6 years please cancel the screening appointment.
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Your follow-up mammograms will be:
1. __________ / __________
2. __________ / __________
3. __________ / __________
4. __________ / __________
5. __________ / __________
6. __________ / __________

A letter will be sent to you regarding the mammogram results. This may take up to 6 weeks.

After your 5th/6th mammogram you may re-enter the National Screening Programme by calling 0121 507 4967. The screening programme will then automatically recall you for a routine mammogram every 3 years if you are aged between 47 and 73 years old.

If you are over 73 years old then you can still request a screening mammogram if you wish, but you will not automatically be recalled.

If you are younger than 47 years old, your follow-up mammograms will still be carried out at the hospital every year until you reach 47 years old.

Hormone treatment
If you have been prescribed hormone tablets to take for 5 years please note these should stop on:

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You may be contacted after 2-3 years to change your hormone tablet. You may also be advised that you need a bone density scan every 1-2 years whilst on certain hormone medication.

Clinical trials
If you are taking part in a clinical trial you may be seen regularly for a longer time period.

Self help/support groups
Breast Cancer Care
0808 800 6000
www.breastcancercare.org.uk

Macmillan Cancer Support
0808 808 0000
www.macmillan.org.uk
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The Courtyard Cancer Information Centre
0121 507 3792
The Courtyard Centre is based at Sandwell Hospital.

Contact details
Breast Care Nurse
0121 507 4976
Monday - Friday, 8.30am - 4.30pm
If your call cannot be answered please leave a message on the answer phone. Messages are checked regularly.

Mammogram appointments
If you need to change your follow-up mammogram appointment please call:
0121 507 5209

When you need to re-enter the National Screening Programme please call:
0121 507 4967

Sources used for the information in this leaflet

• National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence, ‘Early and locally advanced breast cancer’, February 2009


If you would like to suggest any amendments or improvements to this leaflet please contact the communications department on 0121 507 5420 or email: swb-tr.swbh-gm-patient-information@nhs.net