

mission

The mission of Breast Cancer Network of Strength is to ensure, through information, empowerment and peer support, that no one faces breast cancer alone.



212 West Van Buren Street, Suite 1000
Chicago, IL 60607



24/7 Breast Cancer Support Center

Get immediate emotional relief.
Talk to a breast cancer survivor.
800-221-2141

Interpreters in more than 150 languages
www.networkofstrength.org

Special thanks goes to Sheryl G.A. Gabram, MD, MBS, FACS, vice chairman of education, program director general surgery, associate professor of surgery and director of the Cardinal Bernadin Cancer Center; and Prabha Rajan, MD, assistant professor of pathology and director of breast pathology at Loyola University Medical Center. Their input was invaluable in revamping this brochure.

©2008 Breast Cancer Network of Strength

04/07-10M



Understanding Your Breast Cancer Pathology Report

A Guide for Breast Cancer Patients



Being diagnosed with breast cancer is a life-changing event. There are many different emotional reactions to deal with and an enormous amount of information to learn. A call to Your Shoes support center can help with both.

Newly diagnosed women and men, their families and friends, need information that will educate them about breast cancer, possible treatments and prognosis. The pathology report can be a major source of this information. Unfortunately, the pathology report is sometimes written in terms that only pathologists and other medical professionals can understand. The pathology report is a collection of information that describes a patient's breast cancer. Not all tests described in this brochure will be done on an individual tissue sample. This is not wrong. You will note, with careful reading, that some tests give similar information and therefore all tests are not needed. Do not become concerned about any one finding on your pathology report. Most reports contain positive information and some that might be considered negative. It is the whole report that is most important. Specific questions about your pathology report should be directed to your doctor or pathologist.

We have put together this brochure in an effort to make this important document clearly understood by all. Because pathology reports sometimes follow different forms, we have tried to describe the terms that may be used on the report in a general way.

Purpose of the Pathology Report

The purpose of a pathology report is to provide your health care team with information about a surgical specimen or tissue sample. The information is then used to determine the exact nature of the specimen (non-cancerous vs. cancerous) and the characteristics of the tissue sample. If the tissue sample is cancerous, the description of its characteristics will give you and your physician(s) information about size, local extent of the tumor, staging, prognosis and possible treatment options.

Sections of the Pathology Report

Demographics

This section contains identification information. Your name, doctor(s) name(s), medical record number and other identifying information may be included.

Gross Description

In this section, you will find the description of the specimen or tissue sample based on what the naked eye can see. Included here will be the size and weight of the specimen and other visual observations made by the pathologist. Information about how the sample was handled — how it was sectioned and what materials were used — in preparation for the microscopic examination is also included.

Microscopic Description

This part of the report points out the features of the tumor or tissue sample seen under a microscope. These features will lead to the specific diagnosis and will be discussed later.

Prognostic Report

Results of the specific tests performed on the specimen are stated in this section.

Summary and Diagnosis

This section should contain all of the important data from various tests performed on the specimen leading to a diagnosis. The most helpful part of this section is a list of characteristics and the findings related to the specific specimen.

