



EXPOSE TNBC

Triple Negative Breast Cancer

*Lived Experiences.
Expert Insights.
Empowering Resources
for Your TNBC Journey.*



**Newly
Diagnosed?**

What your diagnosis means – and what you can do next.



**Real Women.
Real Stories.**

Hear their courageous journeys through TNBC, told in their own words.



**Caring for
Yourself**

Mental health tips, mindfulness activities and care templates to help navigate your journey at your own pace.



**You're
Not Alone**

Resources and support groups created for you.

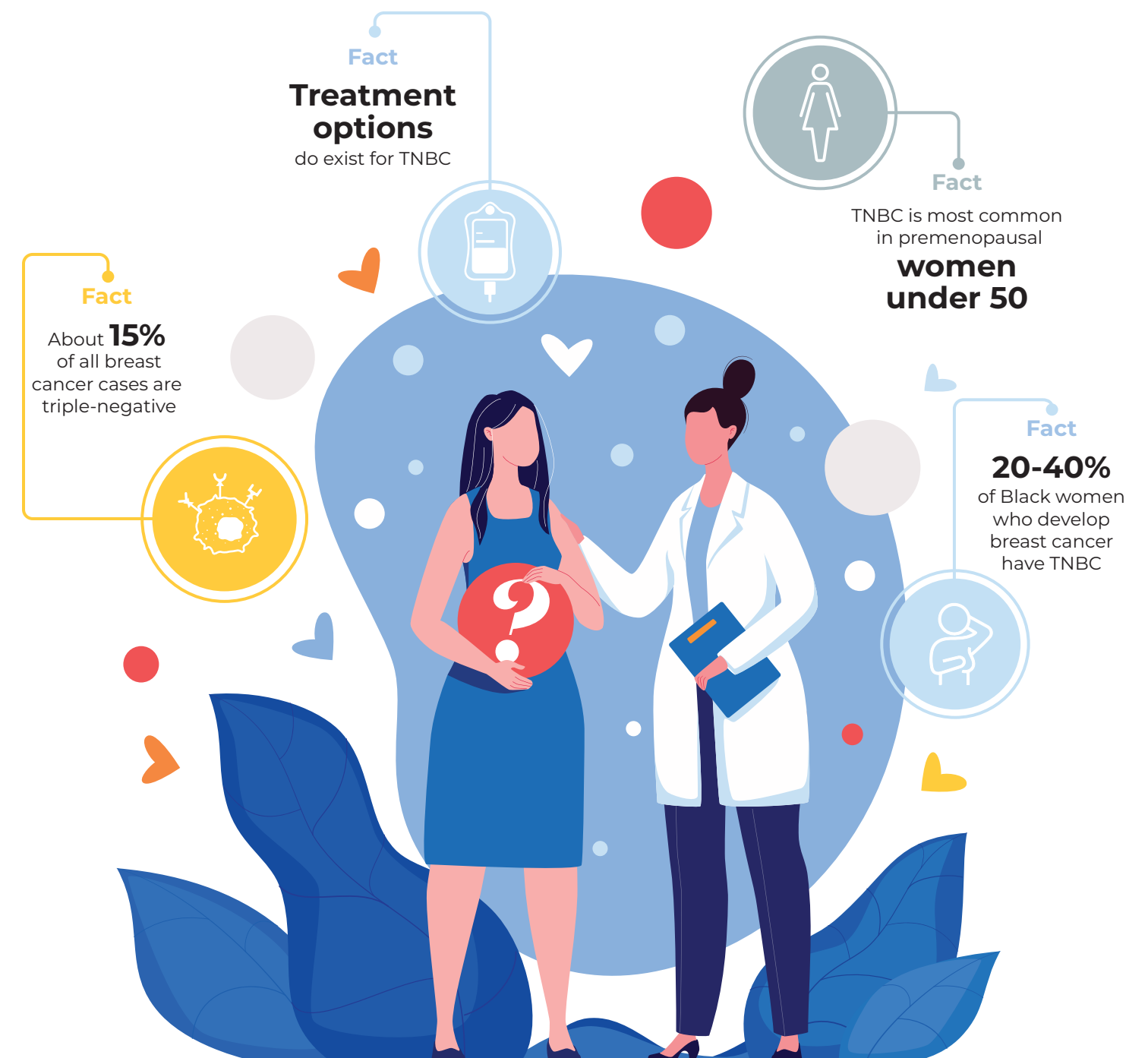


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What is triple-negative breast cancer (TNBC)?





What You Need to Know About Understanding Your Diagnosis

Being diagnosed with triple-negative breast cancer (TNBC) can be overwhelming, but understanding your diagnosis is the first step toward feeling more in control of your journey.

What Does it Mean to Have TNBC?

Your doctor may have told you that triple-negative breast cancer (TNBC) is a type of breast cancer that tests negative for estrogen receptors (ER), progesterone receptors (PR), and the protein, human epidermal growth factor receptor 2 (HER2).ⁱ (See page 16 for a full diagram of receptors). This classification means that TNBC does not typically respond to hormonal therapy or medications that target HER2, which are common treatments for other breast cancer types, but other treatment options exist.

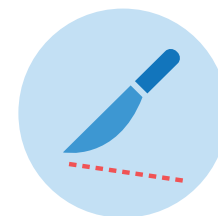
About 15% of all breast cancer cases are triple-negative.ⁱⁱ In Canada, it is estimated that about 4,500 women are diagnosed with TNBC every year.^{iii,iv}



What is the Treatment for TNBC?

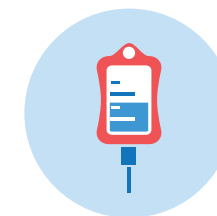
While hormonal and HER2+ targeted therapies are not typically effective in the treatment of TNBC, because these tumours do not have receptors for estrogen, progesterone or have HER2 protein, there are other options available. Your healthcare team will develop a personalized treatment plan just for you, based on your individual diagnosis and health status.

Some of the treatment options you may have discussed with your healthcare team include:^{*}



Surgery

Depending on the type of tumour, its size, and where the cancer has spread, surgery to remove all or part of the tumour may be an option.



Chemotherapy

A drug treatment regimen that is used to kill fast-growing cells in your body. Cancer cells grow and multiply much more quickly than other cells in your body, so chemotherapy is often used as a first treatment for a variety of different cancers. There are many different chemotherapy drugs available, and they can be used alone or in combination with other drugs.^v



Radiation therapy

A type of treatment that uses high-energy rays or particles to kill cancer cells, is sometimes offered following surgery.



Immunotherapy

This type of treatment aims to strengthen or restore your immune system's ability to fight cancer. Immunotherapies can also be used in conjunction with chemotherapy for certain cancers.



What Makes TNBC Different from Other Types of Breast Cancer?

Understanding how TNBC is unique from other breast cancers can help you better navigate your treatment plan. TNBC is a biologically different subtype of breast cancer, characterized by:

1. Faster Growth and Spread

TNBC typically grows and spreads more quickly than hormone-positive breast cancers. Often, TNBC is diagnosed at a later stage in comparison to other breast cancers.^{vi} These tumours tend to spread to the brain or lungs more often than other breast cancers that aren't triple negative, but they don't spread to the bones as frequently.^{vii}

2. Higher Recurrence Risk

TNBC is more likely to come back (called 'recurrence') within the first three years after treatment, compared to hormone-receptor positive (HER2 positive) breast cancer, however, if recurrence doesn't happen during that time, the risk decreases.^{viii}

3. Genetic Ties

There is a strong connection between BRCA1 genetic mutations and TNBC. About 70% of breast cancers in people with the BRCA1 gene are triple negative.^{ix} If you haven't already had genetic testing, you may want to discuss this with your health team, especially if you have a family history of breast or ovarian cancer.

What Can I Do Now?

1. Ask Questions

Stay closely connected with your healthcare team and don't hesitate to ask any questions related to your diagnosis or treatment plan. Your healthcare team is there to support you.

2. Lifestyle Support

Making some simple lifestyle changes can support your wellbeing and overall health both during and after treatment. Always consult with your healthcare team on the best lifestyle changes to support your journey.



• **Nutrition:** Eating a diet rich in vegetables, fruits, whole grains and protein is a good place to start. Eating well over the long-term can help you heal and recover after treatment, and lower your risk of chronic diseases, and gives you a sense of control over your own health. Studies have shown that people with cancer who are well nourished and able to maintain a healthy body weight have better outcomes than people who lose a lot of weight.^x



• **Physical Activity:** Exercise can be an effective way to manage or reduce many common side effects of cancer treatments. It can boost energy levels, improve strength and physical fitness, lift your mood, and support overall recovery.^{xi} Gentle activities like walking and yoga may also help ease the stress that a cancer diagnosis can cause.^{xii} For most people, it's safe to begin exercising at any point after a cancer diagnosis, as long as you start slowly and gradually build up your activity level.^{xiii}



• **Stress Management:** It's perfectly normal to feel stressed or anxious following a cancer diagnosis. There are many things you can do to reduce stress and learn to cope with overwhelming emotions, such as yoga, mindfulness practices, or speaking with a counsellor. Your healthcare team may also be able to help by referring you to a stress management class or support program. Figuring out what works for you can lower your stress levels and build your emotional strength to get through difficult days. Check out the interview with psychologist Dr. Natasha Sharma on page 10 for some tips and resources.

3. Find Your Community

Remember you're not alone. While a cancer diagnosis can feel overwhelming and isolating, you are part of a strong community of women who have been where you are today. Surround yourself not just with information, but with support. Consider reaching out to:

- **Peer Support Networks:** Organizations like *The Olive Branch of Hope* or *Rethink Breast Cancer* to connect with women and survivors of TNBC who can support you on your journey.
- **Social Workers or Psychologists:** These experts can provide you with tools, resources and support for your mental and emotional wellbeing.
- **Online or Local Support Groups:** Check out the resources section on page 30 for a list of ideas on where to start.
- **Friends and Family:** You don't have to face this alone. Lean on the people who want to be there for you during this time, whether it's helping out around the house, taking you to appointments, or just being a safe space to listen. Allow the people in your life to help and support you when you need it – you deserve it!

ⁱ American Cancer Society. Triple-negative breast cancer. Available at: <https://www.cancer.org/cancer/types/breast-cancer/about/types-of-breast-cancer/triple-negative.html>.

ⁱⁱ Ibid.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid.

^{iv} Canadian Cancer Society. Breast Cancer Statistics. Available at: <https://cancer.ca/en/cancer-information/cancer-types/breast/statistics>.

^v Chemotherapy. Mayo Clinic. Available at: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/chemotherapy/about/pac-20385033#:~:text=Chemotherapy%20is%20a%20drug%20treatment,different%20chemotherapy%20drugs%20are%20available>

^{vi} American Cancer Society. Triple-negative breast cancer. Available at: <https://www.cancer.org/cancer/types/breast-cancer/about/types-of-breast-cancer/triple-negative.html>.

^{vii} Foulkes, W D, et al. (2010) Triple-Negative Breast Cancer. *N Engl J Med* 363(20), 1938. Available at: <https://www.nejm.org/doi/10.1056/NEJMr1001389>

^{viii} Pogoda, K, et al. (2013) Analysis of pattern, time, and risk factors influencing recurrence in triple-negative breast cancer patients. *Med oncol*, 30(1), 388. Available at: <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC3586394/#:~:text=prior%20brain%20disease,-The%20highest%20risk%20of%20recurrence%20was%20during%20the%20first%203,complete%20and%20verify%20these%20results>.

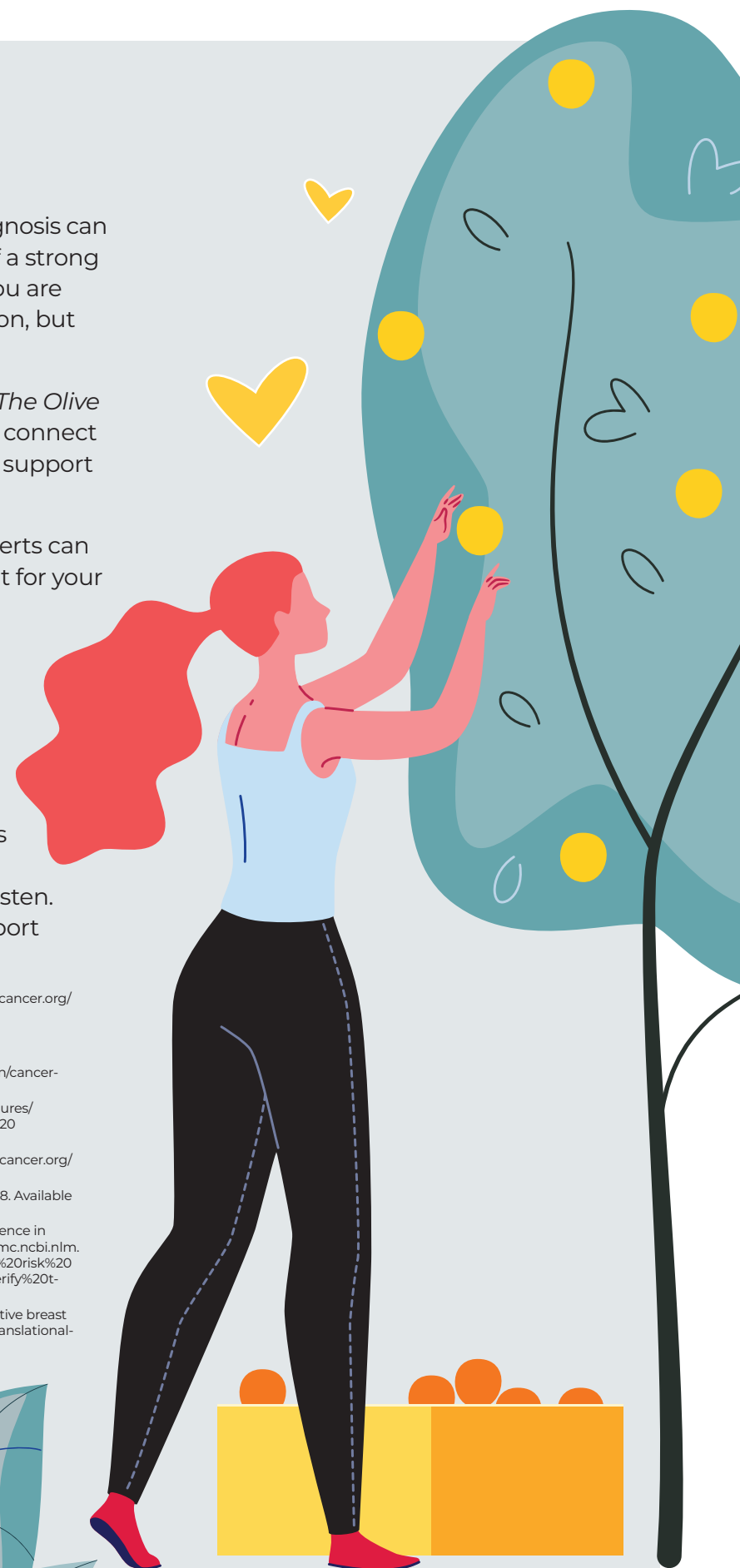
^{ix} Mahfoudh, W, et al. (2019) Contribution of BRCA1 5382insC mutation in triple negative breast cancer in Tunisia. *Journal of translational medicine*, 17(1), 123. Available at: <https://translational-medicine.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12967-019-1873-8>

^x Canadian Cancer Society. Eating Well. Available at: <https://cancer.ca/en/living-with-cancer/coping-with-changes/feeling-your-best/eating-well>.

^{xi} BC Cancer. Exercise Support. Available at: <http://www.bccancer.bc.ca/health-info/coping-with-cancer/exercise-support>.

^{xii} Cleveland Clinic. Triple-Negative Breast Cancer. Available at: Triple-Negative Breast Cancer (TNBC)

^{xiii} BC Cancer. Exercise Support. Available at: <http://www.bccancer.bc.ca/health-info/coping-with-cancer/exercise-support>.



Building Community: Dianne's Path to Support and Belonging

Dianne is the kind of person who lights up a room. Her friends and family describe her as bubbly, social, and a true optimist; a glass-half-full person who finds joy in life's simplest pleasures. A devoted mother and full-time professional at a wealth management office, Dianne's life before breast cancer was vibrant, filled with what she loved: family gatherings, children's laughter, and meaningful work. But in 2016, this was overshadowed by a TNBC diagnosis.

The Diagnosis

The TNBC diagnosis hit hard. "It was a whirlwind," Dianne recalls. She soon began treatment, bracing herself for chemotherapy, and reluctant to face the associated hair loss. By June 2017, after months of treatments, Dianne and her family celebrated her remission. With clear margins and a hopeful heart, she dove back into life, determined to reclaim her joy.

But cancer had other plans. In 2022, Dianne received the devastating news that her cancer had returned, this time as metastatic breast cancer. The call came while she was at work.

"I didn't know how to process it," she admits.

"I never asked how much time I had because I didn't want to know."

Breaking the news to her family was one of the hardest moments of her journey. Yet, even in the face of such heartbreak, Dianne's mission to make every moment count only grew stronger.



Dianne sought support groups to help her cope with the challenges of metastatic breast cancer.

She gathered her loved ones and shared her new reality, emphasizing the importance of cherishing their time together.

"My time is precious, she told them. We have to really make the memories count."

Discovering Belonging

As Dianne navigated this new chapter of her life, she sought out support groups to help her cope with the challenges of metastatic breast cancer. However, what she encountered was disheartening. Many of the available resources failed to reflect her experiences as a Black woman. "Women of colour really want to learn from each other about the best way to handle the news and to make the best decisions regarding treatment," she explains. "A lot of the support groups did not represent my journey and my culture."

This lack of representation left Dianne feeling isolated at an already overwhelming time. She yearned for a space where she could connect with others who truly understood her unique challenges, not just as someone facing a terminal illness, but also as a woman of colour navigating a healthcare system that often overlooks cultural nuances.

After searching for the right fit for her, Dianne discovered *The Olive Branch of Hope*, a culturally inclusive support group that finally felt like home.

For the first time, she found herself surrounded by women who shared her experiences and offered both practical advice and emotional support.

"They rallied around me and were so inspired by my story," Dianne says with a smile. "It was wonderful." *The Olive Branch of Hope* became more than just a support group; it became a lifeline.



A devoted mother and full-time professional at a wealth management office, Dianne's life before breast cancer was vibrant, filled with what she loved: family gatherings, children's laughter, and meaningful work.

Today, Dianne reflects on the legacy she hopes to leave behind. For her, it's all about the power of connection: celebrating life's milestones, giving back to the community, and finding joy in the everyday. "Life is so amazing, but you have to put into it what you want to get out," she says.

Her story is a testament to resilience, faith, and the transformative power of community. For women like Dianne, representation in support spaces isn't just important, it's essential. And through her courage and determination, she's ensuring that others won't have to search as hard to find it.

You can see a video of Dianne's journey here:



Navigating the Emotional Impact of Triple-Negative Breast Cancer

A diagnosis of TNBC can feel like the ground has shifted beneath you. In conversation with Natasha Sharma Beganyi, Founder of NKS Therapy, therapist, and health and wellness expert, she offered some practical, compassionate strategies for navigating the mental and emotional health impacts that can so often be a silent struggle following a serious health diagnosis.

Coping with Strong Emotions

"It is normal to feel anxiety and overwhelm," says Beganyi, "Coping with these feelings will be unique to each person, but there are some general strategies that can help."



The first step is becoming aware of exactly what you are feeling. "This is usually possible when we get quiet with ourselves," says Beganyi. "Try long walks, meditation, or other activities where you can be with your thoughts without distraction."

She also recommends giving yourself permission to feel whatever it is that you feel, without judgment.

“

You can be strong without having it altogether all the time.

”

Try gently processing your emotions through journaling or talking with a trusted friend or family member. Learning and practicing emotional regulation techniques, such as deep breathing, muscle relations, meditation, music, exercise, or yoga may also help. And if possible, speak with a therapist who specializes in cancer-related anxiety.

"Stress is inevitable when facing a significant health issue," says Beganyi. "The goal is to stay grounded and informed as much as possible, in order to make decisions from a place that feels safe."

Finding Support

Feelings like anxiety and depression can cause people to self-isolate, especially at a time when they need a support network more than ever. Lean on loved ones like friends and family for emotional support, and practical support when needed.

"You are not a burden to those who genuinely care for you and your well-being," says Beganyi.

Having a strong support network is often a defining factor in coping with mental and physical challenges during a serious health issue. Support networks provide us with company and connection, preventing us from feeling alone and isolated. They can also provide much-needed practical support such as meals, appointments, childcare, etc., along with keeping us accountable and on top of self-care and treatment plans.

"Perhaps most importantly, support networks can help reduce feelings of anxiety and depression," says Beganyi. "Simple conversation or just being with others helps us feel connected and adds some normalcy during a time of intense distress."

Even if you don't have a strong support network of friends and family around, you don't need to carry it all alone.

"Acknowledge your need for connection and support," says Beganyi. "You're human, and nobody is an island, especially during a crisis."

Consider joining a support group with other women who have been diagnosed with TNBC, in person if possible, or online. And consider connecting with community and educational resources like those listed on page 30.

"Ask for help where needed, even if it is just from acquaintances," adds Beganyi. "You will be surprised by who is willing to lend a helping hand."

She also recommends journaling or writing down your thoughts and feelings. This is a way to connect with yourself and find support through your own self, which can feel very empowering. Finally, do things that you enjoy and feel good, like getting a massage, watching your favourite TV show or movie, cooking your favourite meals, or listening to your favourite music.

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Dealing with Physical Changes

The physical changes experienced by women with TNBC can be significant, and the emotional response is very real. Changes such as hair loss, scars, weight, surgery, fatigue, physical strength, and more can cause a real sense of loss and a shift in how one sees themselves. This experience is deeply personal and can be one of the most difficult parts of facing a cancer diagnosis.

“It’s important to acknowledge the grief that may accompany those changes, and allow yourself to feel the sadness, anger, frustration, and helplessness,” advises Beganyi. “There can be a lot of external pressure to love your body as it is and accept all its changes straight away; you don’t need to do that. It’s not realistic and denies us the very real loss that is incurred.”

Instead, Beganyi recommends simply acknowledging the existence of your body as it is at this moment in time. Learning to love your body again will come in time.

In the meantime, try some of these strategies:

- **Talk to a mental health professional** who understands cancer and shifting body image. It’s important to talk through feelings of being disconnected from your body, any feelings of shame or feelings of not recognizing your body.
- **Find accessories or external aids** that feel good to you and support your sense of self. This can include clothing, wigs, or other forms of expression that fit with who you are. Do not feel pressure to use accessories, and do not feel pressure to shun them. Whatever works best for you is best!
- **Connect with others** who understand, such as support groups of women facing physical changes as a result of cancer. You can find a list on page 30.
- **Reconnect** when you’re ready with your body. Express gratitude and curiosity for how it is evolving, and continue to nourish and take care of it in the best ways you can.
- **Remind yourself** that EVERYONE’s body changes with time and age, and although these changes may have come earlier and be more significant, they do not define your beauty or femininity.



Building Emotional Resilience

Emotional resilience is not about being strong, put together, staying positive or coping all the time. It’s more about our ability to face intense distress, pain, fear, and uncertainty and come out on the other side of it.

“Emotional resilience is about facing major setbacks and eventually recovering,” says Beganyi. “Recovery may entail many mini setbacks and emotional breakdowns, and this – while extremely challenging – is also ok. It’s about feeling sadness, anger, rage, despair, without being ultimately destroyed by these emotions.”

We may fall apart; however, it’s having the ability to hope and believe that there is (eventually) “beauty in the breakdown.”

It is about trying to find gratitude and meaning in life when it seems almost impossible to do.

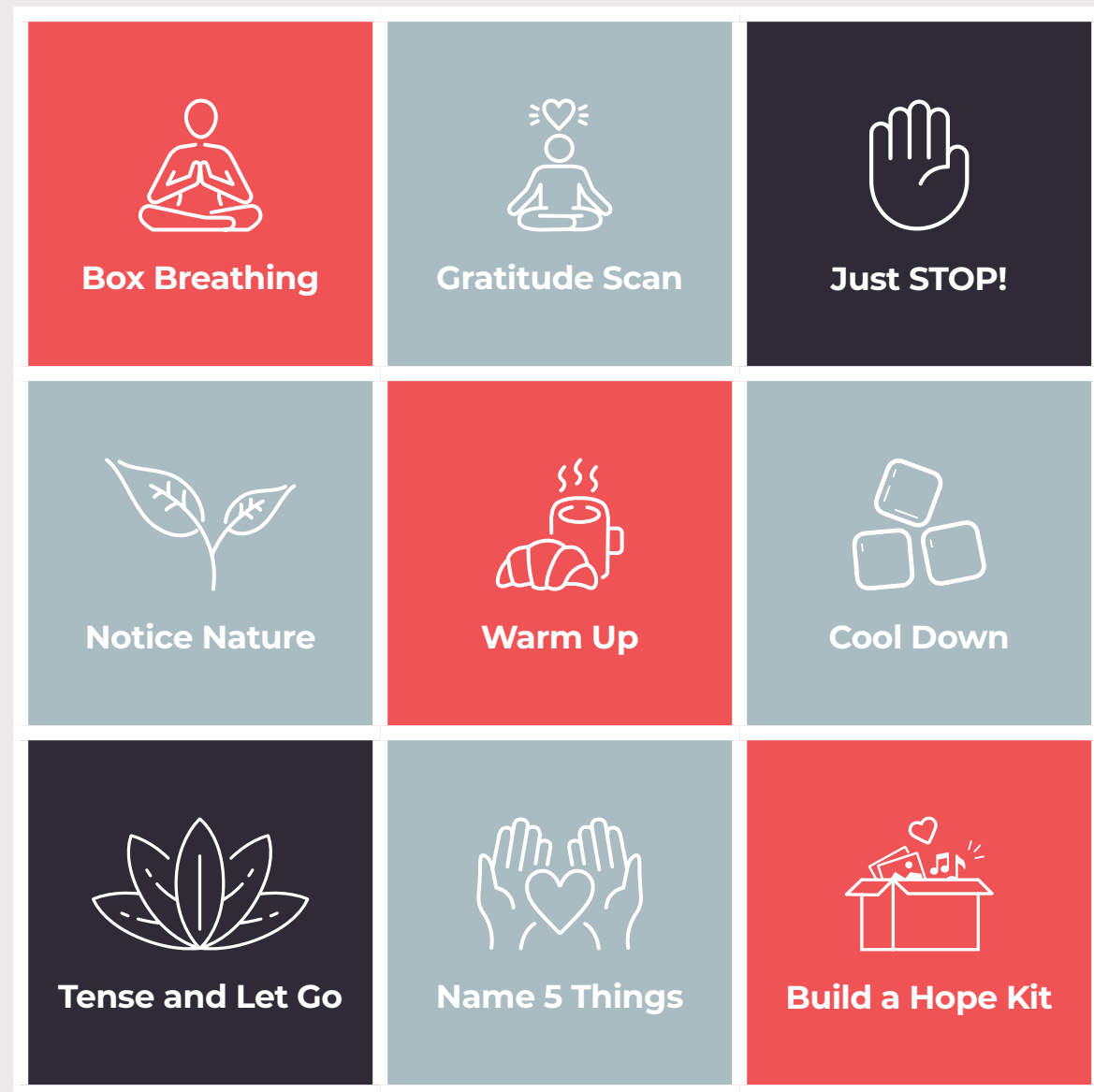
There is no “right” way to cope with a serious health issue like TNBC, but there are many ways to find support, ground yourself emotionally, and move forward – one step at a time. Mental and emotional healthcare are part of healing, so permit yourself to feel, to ask for help, or to simply exist just as you are right now.





Mindful Moments

You may feel like you're dealing with so much right now that self-care or mindfulness is just another task on a never-ending to do list. But even small moments of self-care can have a big impact. It doesn't have to be perfect or time-consuming either. The following simple activities are gentle, grounding ways to help care for your body and mind, even on the toughest days. They are designed to be low energy and low pressure, but mood lifting. Try one, or a few, and come back to them whenever you need a little extra care.



1. Box Breathing

- Inhale for 4 seconds, hold for 4 seconds, exhale for 4 seconds, and hold for 4 seconds. Try doing this five times in a row – that's over a minute of mindful breathing!

2. Gratitude Scan

- Say or write down three small things you're grateful for – a soft blanket, a text from a friend, or even just getting through a hard day.

3. Just STOP!

- Try the **STOP** technique when you feel like your mind or thoughts are spinning out of control.
 - **Stop:** take a brief pause.
 - **Take a breath:** take a deep, deliberate and mindful breath.
 - **Observe:** Acknowledge your thoughts and feelings without judgement.
 - **Proceed Mindfully:** Take the next step with intentionality, choosing a conscious response that is aligned with your values and goals.

4. Notice Nature

- Step outside or sit by a window and look at the sky, a tree or a plant. Just let your eyes rest there for a full minute without needing to do anything.

5. Warm Up

- Sip tea, warm water or any comforting drink without distractions. Try to focus on the warmth, the smell and the taste for at least one minute.

6. Cool Down

- Fill a large bowl with ice water, take a deep breath, and submerge your face in the bowl (to your temples). Try to stay for 30 to 60 seconds if you can.

7. Tense and Let Go

- Start at the top of your body and tense each muscle for a count of 5, moving down your body. For example, bring your shoulders up to your ears, hold for 5 seconds, and relax. Make a fist and tense your arms, hold for 5 seconds, then relax.

8. Name 5 Things

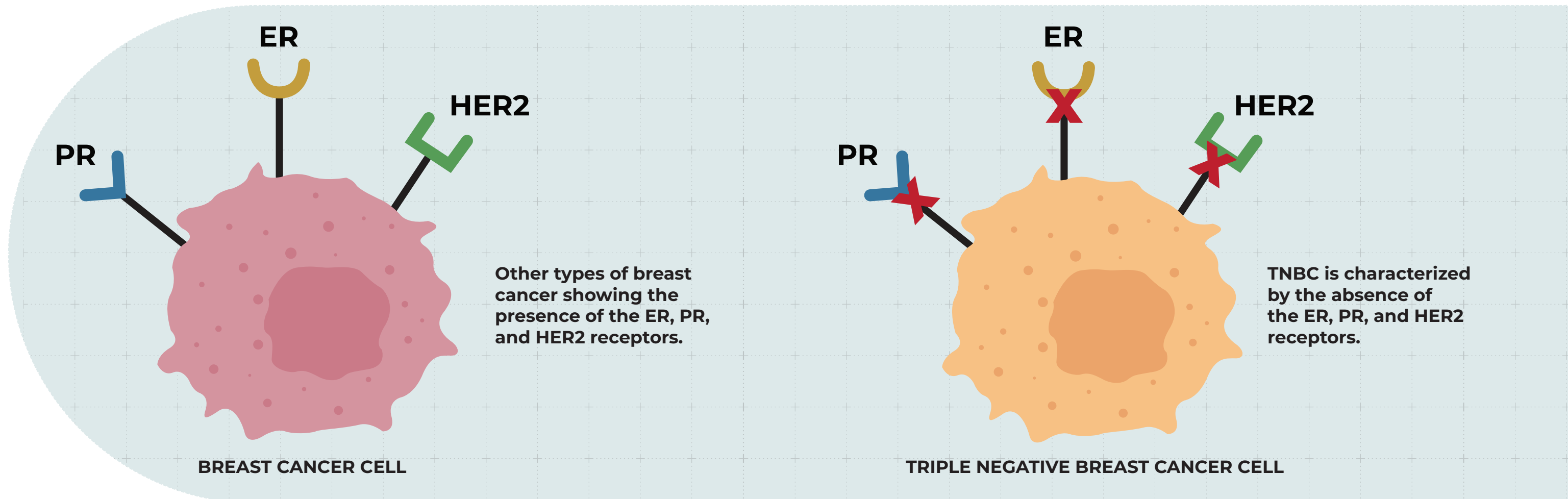
- Ground yourself with the 5-4-3-2-1 method. Name:
 - **5** things you see
 - **4** things you feel
 - **3** things you hear
 - **2** things you smell
 - **1** thing you taste

9. Build a Hope Kit

- Start a physical or digital collection of things that fill you with hope and joy. It might be old photos, playlists of your favourite music, cards or messages from friends, or a list of activities that give you a feeling of hope of change – like watching your favourite funny video clips or going for a walk with a friend. You don't have to do it all at once – try adding one item to your kit each week, or whenever you feel up to it!

What makes TNBC different from other sub-types of breast cancer?

TNBC differs from other sub-types of breast cancer because it lacks three key receptors that are used to identify treatment options. Breast cancer is tested for the estrogen receptor (ER), the progesterone receptor (PR), and the human epidermal growth factor receptor 2 (HER2). TNBC tests negative for all three (or is limited for the HER2 receptor). Because TNBC lacks these receptors, it does not typically respond to hormonal therapy or medications that target HER2, which are common for other sub-types of breast cancer. However, other treatment options do exist and should be discussed with your healthcare provider. The following diagram represents how TNBC differs from other sub-types of breast cancer.

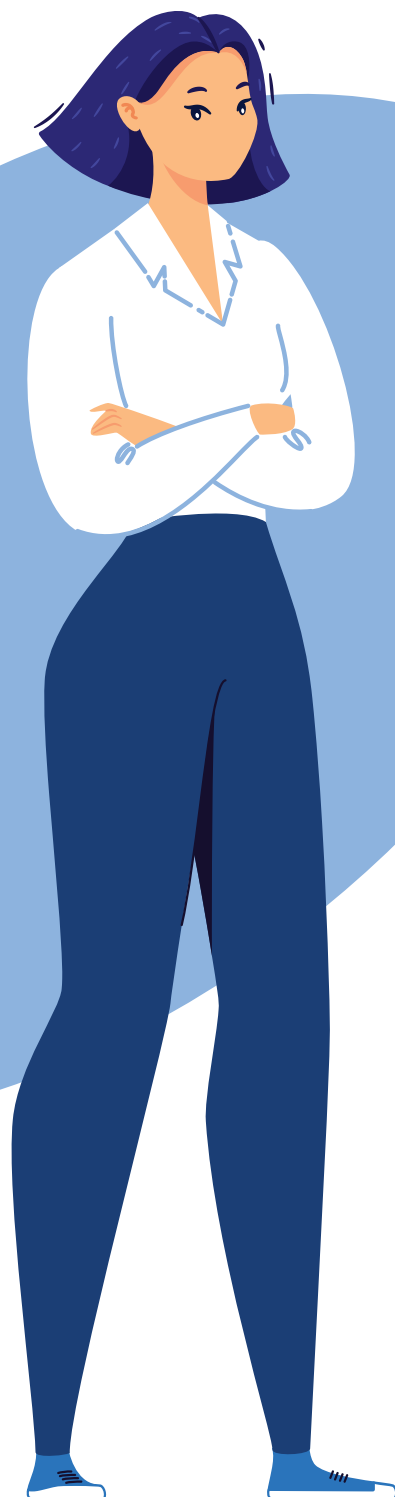


THINGS TO CONSIDER

7

Things to Consider After a TNBC Diagnosis

After a TNBC diagnosis, it's important to remember that you're not alone in this journey and that there are many resources and supports available. Here are some things to consider if you've been recently diagnosed.



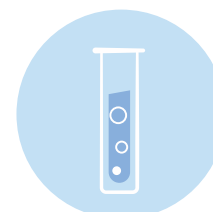
1 It's normal to feel a range of emotions.

A TNBC diagnosis could change the trajectory of your life. It's normal to feel emotions like anxiety, worry, depression, impatience, frustration, and disappointment. Consider speaking with your oncology care team to see what supports are available.



2 Although you've received a diagnosis, further testing may be necessary.

Before treatment, further testing may be needed even after a diagnosis has been given. Additional testing may include an MRI, a PET scan, or a CT scan.



3 There is no standard timeline for testing and treatment.

The timeline for testing and appointments will be variable by health region and depends on the capacity of the healthcare system.

4 Write down questions for your healthcare team.

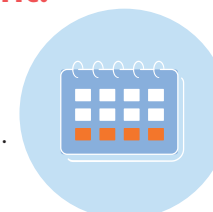
Doctor's appointments can feel overwhelming due to the amount of information you receive. Feel more empowered in your appointments by writing down your questions in advance and taking notes.



Check out the Appointment Notes on page 28.

5 Keeping on top of your calendar is important.

Coping with testing and treatment appointments requires good organization. You may want to consider a shared calendar for family and friends who want to support you.



6 Take time for self-care when you can.

Cancer is a journey, not a sprint. Things like physical activity, a balanced diet, and social supports can make a difference.



7 If you wish to have children, consider speaking to a fertility expert.

If your plans include having children in the future, speak with a fertility expert to learn how treatments may affect fertility and to discuss options, such as egg freezing.



To read more about the above considerations, visit ExposeTNBC.ca and check out the 'What to expect in your first week, month, and year following a TNBC diagnosis' article, created in partnership with Jordan Rivera, a Toronto-based oncology nurse practitioner.



Redefining Beauty: Laura's Journey Through Hair Loss & Healing



When Laura began treatment, she knew she might experience hair loss, but the reality of that experience was different than what she'd imagined.

When Laura was diagnosed with TNBC, she knew the road ahead would be challenging. TNBC is an aggressive form of breast cancer that disproportionately affects younger, Black women. In fact, the incidence of TNBC in Black women is twice that of White women.¹ What she didn't anticipate, however, was how deeply the experience would transform not just her health, but her self-image.

"There were things that I just didn't know what to expect, and it affected me differently," Laura says. "I'm grateful I had a few Black nurses who helped me understand the symptoms I might see, especially in my skin. My skin tone changed a lot during treatment."

For many women, hair is an important part of their identity, and for Black women in particular, it can carry a complex history tied not only to physical appearance but to cultural pride. When Laura began treatment, she knew she might experience hair loss, but the reality of that experience was different than what she'd imagined.

"You think about losing the hair on your scalp, but you don't expect to lose every hair – your eyebrows, your eyelashes," Laura says. For Black women especially, we have a history, hair and politics, what is beautiful, what you should look like. I had to confront all of that."

The emotional toll of hair loss, skin changes and shifts in self-image can be extremely challenging, especially in communities where vulnerability and illness feel like taboo topics.

"I do think there's this old-school mentality of 'don't tell people your business,'" Laura says. "It's a bizarre situation where you're the one who's sick, but you feel guilty for being sick."

Support organizations like *The Olive Branch of Hope* are working to normalize these conversations, especially for women of colour.

"Most Black women have never heard the term 'triple-negative breast cancer,' and most young women are not aware that there is a strain of breast cancer that affects them more than others," says Leila Nicholls-Springer, breast cancer survivor and founder of *The Olive Branch of Hope*, a support and resource center for culturally diverse women with breast cancer.

Representation allows us to speak for ourselves. It is key for women of colour because it brings the awareness piece to the forefront—that we are serving all women, not just one type.

Luckily in Canada, there are many organizations and resources available to support women and help them find community during their cancer journey. *Rethink Breast Cancer* is a national organization that educates, empowers and advocates for system changes to improve the experience and outcomes of those with breast cancer, focusing on historically underserved groups: women diagnosed at a younger age, those with metastatic breast cancer and people systemically marginalized due to other factors within the social determinants of health.

For Laura, learning to ask for and accept help from others was a big shift in her healing process. "I often have to remind myself – it's okay to take help. I do deserve it," she says.



The emotional toll of hair loss, skin changes and shifts in self-image can be extremely challenging, especially in communities where vulnerability and illness feel like taboo topics.

Now, Laura is creating a life on her terms, surrounded by her support system – her loved ones, her family and her friends, which she calls her 'army.' Over time, through her deeply personal journey, Laura found a new kind of strength and beauty.

"Now, I make my choices. I surround myself with the most important people in my life," Laura says. "For me, beauty is more about a feeling now. I feel beautiful when I feel good on the inside. That's more important to me than anything."

Today, when Laura looks in the mirror, she doesn't just see a woman who survived cancer, she sees a warrior.

"I see someone who has faced more than her fears. I love myself more now because I've gone through all of that," Laura says. "There's not a lot I'm afraid of anymore."

For a list of additional resources and organizations, visit page 30.

You can see a video of Laura's journey here:



¹ Plasilova, ML, et al (2016) *Medicine*, 95(35), e4614. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1097/MD.00000000000004614>



CAREGIVERS CORNER

Stronger Together: Caring for a Loved One with TNBC

When someone you love is diagnosed with TNBC, their world suddenly changes, and so does yours. Whether you're a spouse, sibling, parent or close friend, you may become not just a support system, but a caregiver, and this changing role can feel scary or overwhelming. You want to support and care for your loved one, but you're not sure what they need or where to start.

First, know that you are not alone. In Canada, about 1 in 4 adults (7.8 million people) provide care to a family or friend with a long-term health condition or disability.¹ And while being a caregiver can be extremely meaningful, it can also be physically and emotionally challenging.

There are many ways that you can offer support to your loved one on their journey, while also caring for yourself and avoiding burnout. Focusing on practical support, emotional support, and self-care are key to getting through this difficult time together. And remember, presence is more important than perfection. You don't need to do everything perfectly; sometimes just showing up is enough.

Practical Support Tips

- 1. Learn more about TNBC:** Understanding your loved one's diagnosis and treatment plan will help you anticipate what they need and provide the right support. Check out the list of resources on page 30 for good places to start your research.
- 2. Assist with daily tasks:** Alleviating some of your loved one's daily to-dos – like cooking, cleaning, or running errands – can help lower their stress levels and allow them to take more time for rest and recovery.
- 3. Help with appointments and paperwork:** Scheduling appointments, coordinating travel, taking notes at doctor's appointments and assisting with medical-related paperwork can be a huge asset. In addition to the time these tasks take, they can also be emotionally exhausting for your loved one, especially while they are in treatment.

¹ Statistics Canada. The Daily – Caregivers in Canada, 2018. Available at: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/200108/dq200108a-eng.htm>

Emotional Support Tips

- 1. Listen to and validate their emotions:** Be a safe space for your loved one to share their full range of emotions, without feeling like you need to fix it or solve their problems. Don't pressure them to be positive all the time; just listening and validating how they feel is enough.
- 2. Support their choices:** Whether it's treatment plans, lifestyle changes or how they spend their time, support your loved one's decisions, even if you would do things differently. It's important to empower them during this time when they might feel powerless.
- 3. Maintain some sense of normalcy:** Don't make every interaction about their illness, unless they lead it there. It's healthy and okay to talk about something beyond cancer. Topics like hobbies, shows, memories, etc. can help foster a sense of normalcy during challenging times.



Self-Care Tips

- 1. Take care of your own health:** Prioritizing your sleep, moving your body a bit each day, eating nourishing meals and staying hydrated will ensure you have enough fuel to help your loved one throughout their journey.
- 2. Set boundaries and ask for support:** It's okay to feel scared, overwhelmed or exhausted. Tell your loved one when you need to take a break, and seek out support when you need it. Speaking with a friend, counsellor or joining a caregiver support group can provide a much-needed outlet for you to express your own emotions during this time.
- 3. Fill your cup:** Allow yourself moments of joy. Plan some time for yourself to laugh, relax or do something fun. Watch a movie, read a book or play with your kids or pets. Above all, remember that taking care of yourself is not selfish – it's how you ensure you can keep showing up for your loved one.





Self-Compassion Crossword Puzzle

A gentle activity to reflect, reset, and reconnect with yourself. These words are all part of building a kinder inner voice. Can you guess them all?'

Across

- 1. Where self-reflection starts—literally and metaphorically.
- 3. Being kind to yourself when things are hard.
- 6. A feeling of expectation and desire for better moments ahead.
- 7. A quality we often extend to others, but must remember to give ourselves.
- 8. Someone who is there for you, even if it's you.
- 10. The personal process of recovering emotionally, mentally, or physically.
- 11. A motion of inhaling and exhaling to ground ourselves and take a moment.

Down

- 1. Being aware, conscious and present in the current moment.
- 2. A repeated phrase that brings calmness, clarity, or courage.
- 4. A group of people who uplift you and remind you you're not alone.
- 5. A deep awareness of your own and others' suffering, paired with kindness.
- 9. A short break to rest or think.



My Cancer Journal

Navigating a cancer journey can be complex, but staying organized can help provide a sense of stability and control. The following pages were created as an easy-to-use resource to help you keep important information in one place, to give you space to reflect on your thoughts and experiences, and to empower you to take an active role in your care.

My Diagnosis

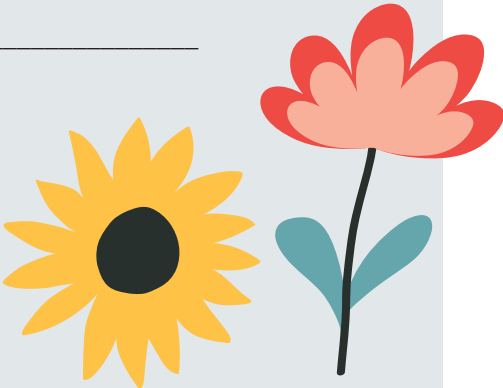
Date I was diagnosed: _____

Diagnosis given by: _____

Name of my cancer: _____

My cancer is / is not metastatic (circle *is* or *is not*)

Other information about my diagnosis (include tumour size, grade and stage if known):





My Care Team



My Oncologist

Name: _____

Phone number: _____

Notes: _____

My Family Doctor

Name: _____

Phone number: _____

Notes: _____

My Primary Nurse

Name: _____

Phone number: _____

Notes: _____

Other Healthcare provider(s)

Name: _____

Phone number: _____

Notes: _____

My Cancer Centre/Hospital

Name: _____

Phone number: _____

Fax number: _____

Notes: _____

Other Healthcare provider(s)

Name: _____

Phone number: _____

Notes: _____

To learn more about the healthcare providers who may form part of your care team, visit ExposeTNBC.ca.



My Weekly Schedule

Track your appointments and activities in the calendar below. Make sure to note any times you were feeling better or worse than usual, or when you felt like you were doing too much.

For the week of: _____

Monday	
Tuesday	
Wednesday	
Thursday	
Friday	
Saturday	
Sunday	
Notes	



If you find this page helpful, you can download and print here.



My Appointment Notes

Date: _____ Time: _____

Healthcare provider: _____

Appointment location/instructions: _____

Questions I want to ask: _____

Notes: _____



My Mood Tracker

Check in with yourself a few times a week and note how you're feeling. Tracking and understanding your feelings can help you take action or talk to someone when needed. Always ask your healthcare team if you feel you need additional resources or support for your mental or emotional health.

For the week of: _____

Mood Scale:



Date	Time of Day am/pm	Mood Scale #	How I feel emotionally (describe in 1-3 words)	How I feel physically (describe in 1-3 words)

Resources

A TNBC diagnosis can bring a lot of questions and it's easy to feel alone during the early days, but there is a powerful community of women ready to support you. Below is a list of organizations and resources that can help you connect with others who understand exactly what you're going through. From national advocacy organizations to local and online support groups, these resources exist to ensure no one has to face a TNBC diagnosis alone.



The Adventure Jar

A children's book developed in collaboration with members of the metastatic breast cancer (mBC) community to help families talk about mBC and find magic in everyday experiences, even when they aren't perfect. Download the Adventure Jar book at exposetnbc.ca/en/tnbc-resources/adventure-jar.



Canadian
Breast Cancer
Network

Canadian Breast Cancer Network (CBCN)

CBCN strives to voice the views and concerns of breast cancer patients through education, advocacy activities, and the promotion of information sharing. Resources include:

- **Faces of Hope:** Navigating Life with TNBC: A patient magazine that includes educational articles on TNBC, as well as stories from individuals diagnosed with TNBC.
- **TNBC hub:** a website page which explains what TNBC is and provides both educational and support resources for individuals facing TNBC.
- **PatientPath:** CBCN's digital navigation tool that navigates individuals throughout the cancer care continuum, helping them understand what the next steps of a breast cancer diagnosis might look like. The tool asks a series of questions to provide tailored information, resources, and a general treatment plan based on stage, type and sub-type.

For more information, visit CBCN's website at: cbcn.ca/en



Quebec
Breast Cancer
Foundation

Quebec Breast Cancer Foundation

Every day, the Quebec Breast Cancer Foundation works to save lives and improve the quality of life of people living with breast cancer by funding research and innovation, defending patient rights and offering support, generating cutting-edge knowledge and a sense of community, leading prevention and education activities and raising awareness. Resources include:

- **Peer Support Helpline:** a toll-free helpline for individuals in Quebec that connects with a trained peer supporter who has personal experience with breast cancer who offers emotional listening, help navigating the healthcare system in Quebec and additional resources. Call 1-855-561-ROSE (7376) or email info@rubanrose.org.
- **Support Communities:** online and in-person peer-to-peer sharing and emotional support groups from Quebec-based survivors and fighters.

For more information, visit the website at: rubanrose.org and click on Peer Support Services and Resources.



The Olive Branch of Hope

The Olive Branch of Hope (TOBOH) was founded in 2001 by breast cancer survivors Leila Springer and Winsome Johnson. Their mission is to support and empower our diverse community facing cancer challenges. TOBOH is dedicated to serving women of African-Caribbean Heritage and culturally diverse backgrounds, providing support and solidarity in the cancer journey. Resources include:

- **TOBOH Ambassador Program:** pairing newly diagnosed women with a trained peer mentor (Ambassador) who has personal experience with breast cancer and can provide emotional connection, practical guidance and culturally informed advice.
- **Circle of Hope Support Group:** a virtual support group for younger Black women (typically age 45 or younger) navigating breast cancer treatment, recovery and survivorship.

For more information, visit TOBOH's website, at: theolivebranch.ca



Rethink Breast Cancer

Rethink Breast Cancer is a Canadian charity known for making positive change and rethinking the status quo when it comes to breast cancer. Rethink educates, empowers and advocates for system changes to improve the experiences and outcomes of those with breast cancer. Resources include:

- **Virtual Support Groups:** group therapy sessions hosted in a virtual setting, facilitated by a registered social worker or psychotherapist. A safe space to unpack, process and heal in a truly supportive environment. All group sessions are free of charge.
- **Rethink Local Meetups:** in-person events in Toronto, Calgary and Vancouver (may be adding Hamilton and Ottawa in the near future). These are more informal in-person gatherings where people diagnosed with breast cancer can meet others who are also going through this diagnosis.

For more information, including local meet-up dates, visit rethinkbreastcancer.com



ExposeTNBC.ca

A website dedicated to getting real about TNBC, with honest stories, information and resources to expose the realities of this cancer and empower individuals to become stronger in the face of it.

Learn more at:
ExposeTNBC.ca



EXPOSE
TNBC