

## Breast Cancer Survivorship Care

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Long-term survival rates after a diagnosis of breast cancer are steadily rising. Fortunately, important recent advances have been made in therapies for breast cancer, including surgery, chemotherapy, and biologic, endocrine, and radiation therapies, with an improvement in the 5-year survival rate to 87%. Breast cancer survivors are women who have been diagnosed with breast cancer, have completed an initial treatment of surgery, chemotherapy or radiation therapy and no longer have evidence of disease. Survivors of breast cancer represent a unique and extremely complex group of patients. Survivors may experience psychosocial issues for years after cancer diagnosis.

### **AIM:**

- To identify the common psychosocial issues that breast cancer survivors may experience after the completion of treatment.
- To explore treatment modalities of the common psychosocial issues in breast cancer survivors.
- To learn about the current evidence on how to improve breast cancer survivors' outcome with stress on lifestyle modification (diet, exercise and weight loss)

### **MATERIALS AND METHODS:**

Roughly one-quarter of breast cancer survivors experience psychological issues after the completion of treatment. This includes anxiety, depression, fear of recurrence and post-traumatic stress syndrome. Treatment includes psych education, cognitive behavioral therapy, antidepressant medication and physical activity. Evidence has shown that participating in support groups can help breast cancer survivors to find hope and new ways of coping with their feelings. Studies have shown that interventions targeting weight, diet, and physical activity can improve quality of life (QOL), and may minimize disease and treatment-related side effects. Evidence that moderate intensity exercise can improve outcomes in breast cancer survivors. Physical activity can help to improve mental health conditions like anxiety or depression, Although the existing data is inconsistent as to what you should eat to improve your outcome, the general recommendation is to focus on fruits and vegetables, and avoid processed foods, red

meat and fat. Further, drinking alcohol after a breast cancer diagnosis has been associated with increased risk of breast cancer recurrence.

### **RESULTS:**

Survivorship is one of the most complicated parts of having cancer. It is important to address psychosocial issues to maintain quality of life, continue screening program which is critical for survivors. Studies have shown that interventions targeting weight, diet, and physical activity can overall outcome of breast cancer survivors.

### **CONCLUSIONS:**

Physicians including primary care providers and oncologists need to be aware of psychosocial issues related to breast cancer survivorship care. This will help establish a smooth transition from a patient with breast cancer to a survivor of breast cancer while providing ongoing and future guidance.

Further, this will enable survivors to advocate for their own care and improve their awareness about long term psychosocial issues after the treatment period.

### **KEYWORDS:**

Breast cancer, survivorship care, psychosocial, overall outcomes

### **BIOGRAPHY:**

Dr. Muna Al-khaifi is a family physician, passionate about delivering high-quality primary care, with a particular focus on women's health and particularly disease of the breast. She did her residency program in Family Medicine and a fellowship in Women's Health at the University of Toronto. She is a Staff Physician at Women's Health in Women's Hand Community Health Centre and the Breast Centre at St. Michael's Hospital (SMH) in Toronto, Canada. She is also completing a Masters of Public Health through the Dalla Lana School of Public Health. Her research interest is in the area of Breast cancer. She is also highly involved in breast cancer patient education. She has a website that focuses on Breast Cancer survivor Care with a series of videos that incorporate patients' stories.

