



# Influencing best practice in breast cancer

While survival for women with breast cancer in Australia is among the highest in the world, there is evidence that not all patients are receiving the most appropriate care or getting the information they need about the options that are right for them. This unwarranted variation has the potential to have an impact on patient outcomes and experience.

## About the Statement

The aim of the *Cancer Australia Statement – Influencing best practice in breast cancer* is to iron out unwarranted variations in breast cancer care in Australia.

The Statement is a summary of 12 practices that have been identified as appropriate or inappropriate for the provision of evidence-based, patient-centred breast cancer care in Australia. It highlights what 'ought to be done' in breast cancer care to maximise clinical benefit, minimise harm and deliver patient-centred care.

Not every practice will be relevant for all people diagnosed with breast cancer. The practice(s) relevant to an individual will depend on the type and stage of their breast cancer, their age, and where they are in their breast cancer journey.



## HOW WAS THE STATEMENT DEVELOPED?

Cancer Australia took a highly collaborative, consultative and evidence-based approach to the development of the Statement. People with cancer were an integral part of the process, which brought key clinical and cancer organisations together with women with breast cancer to identify priority areas of practice.

## USING THE STATEMENT

The Statement aims to empower people with breast cancer to engage with their health professionals and make informed, evidence-based decisions that deliver the best outcomes for them.

You may wish to talk with your health professionals about the practices in the Statement and about the options available to you.

For more information about the Statement visit [canceraustralia.gov.au/statement](http://canceraustralia.gov.au/statement)



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Appropriate to offer a shorter, more intense course of radiotherapy (hypofractionated radiotherapy) as an alternative to conventional radiotherapy for patients with early breast cancer who:

- ▶ are aged 50 years and over;
- ▶ have a cancer at an early pathological stage (T1-2, N0, M0); and
- ▶ have undergone breast-conserving surgery with clear surgical margins.

## WHAT THIS PRACTICE IS ABOUT

Whole breast radiotherapy is recommended after breast conserving surgery to reduce the risk of cancer coming back in the breast and improve the survival of patients with early breast cancer.\*

External beam radiotherapy uses high-energy X-rays to destroy any breast cancer cells that may be left in the breast. The conventional (standard) approach is to deliver small, daily doses of radiation to the breast over several weeks. For some patients, higher daily doses of radiation may be given over a shorter time period. This is called 'hypofractionated radiotherapy'.

For patients in which it is a suitable treatment, hypofractionated radiotherapy is equally as effective as conventional radiotherapy in terms of the risk of cancer coming back, breast appearance and overall survival.

## WHY THIS PRACTICE MIGHT BE IMPORTANT TO YOU

Hypofractionated radiotherapy may be an option for you if:

- you are 50 years or older;
- your breast cancer is at an early stage; and
- you have had breast conserving surgery and no cancer cells were found in the tissue around the breast cancer removed during surgery.

It may also be considered as an option for you, even if you don't meet these criteria.

Hypofractionated radiotherapy may be more convenient for you than conventional treatment because there are fewer days of treatment. This may also influence your decision about surgical options.

You can discuss the options with your doctor to see whether this treatment is appropriate for you.

## MORE INFORMATION

More information about other recommended practices and the Statement is available at [canceraustralia.gov.au/statement](http://canceraustralia.gov.au/statement)

\* Early breast cancer is defined as invasive cancer that is contained in the breast, or has spread to lymph nodes in the breast or armpit, but not to other parts of the body. Some cancer cells may have spread outside the breast and armpit area but cannot be detected.



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