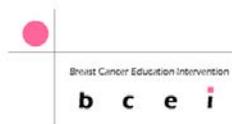




BODY IMAGE AND LOSS CONCERNS

Body image is the way you view yourself and your body. For some women breast cancer may be associated with a loss of confidence about the way you look and how attractive you feel. The media and our culture tells us that breasts are a symbol of being feminine and being a woman. This Tip Sheet provides you with tips to help you with changes in body image.

- **Be patient** and give yourself some time to get used to body changes. Spend some time alone getting used to your body. Scar tissue can change over time, and become fainter.
- **Grieve over the loss or change in your body.** Mourn your loss, it is real and you have a right to grieve.
- **Try to focus** on ways that coping with cancer has made you stronger, wiser, and more realistic.
- **Recognize** that you are more than your cancer.
- **Be proud of your body**.....it got you through treatment, focus on the positive!
- **If you have had chemotherapy**, hair regrowth is gradual over a period of about six months. Over time, your hair will look a lot like it did before cancer. Some women notice a change in their hair texture or color (you've probably heard the term "chemo curl"), so try out new cuts or styles.
- **If you have had mastectomy**, your prosthesis may need to be readjusted after treatment has ended. If you have not yet had a prosthetic fitting, ask your doctor for a referral. You should be refitted once a year, or after any weight loss or gain. Additionally, there are many boutiques that cater to breast cancer survivors that can help with undergarments as well as fittings. Check with your insurance provider, as often bras and prostheses are covered by major medical insurance.
- **Contact your local American Cancer Society "Look Good...Feel Better" program.** "Look Good...Feel Better" is a free, national public service program (available in some areas). Its purpose is to teach women with



Copyright © 2016 BCEI

Used with the permission of the Young Breast Cancer Survivorship Network



BODY IMAGE AND LOSS CONCERNS

cancer beauty practices to help restore the way they look and self-image during and after cancer treatment. Through the “Look Good...Feel Better” sessions, women learn how to cope with the change in the way they look because of side effects of cancer treatment.

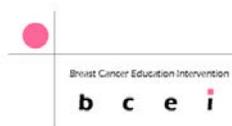
- **Although you may view your body in a different way, don't think that your spouse or partner sees things the same way you do. Your spouse or partner cares for you as the whole person, not for each body part. Spend time together to discuss your concerns about body image after treatment has ended. Some women don't want their spouse or partner to see their scars or breasts after surgery. If you feel this way, take some time to explore these changes yourself and then include your spouse or partner. You may find it helpful to find new clothing options that make you feel good about yourself!**

When Do You Need to Seek Help?

You need to be able to talk openly about your body image concerns. If you have problems talking about your concerns, think about seeing a professional counselor or support group that talks about these issues.

Useful websites:

- <http://www.lbbc.org/programs-events>
- http://www.breastcancer.org/tips/intimacy/self_image



Copyright © 2016 BCEI

Used with the permission of the Young Breast Cancer Survivorship Network