

Breast Cancer Staging

STAGES AND WHAT THEY MEAN

Non-invasive tumor < 2 cm



Stage 0

Is used to describe non-invasive breast cancers, like DCIS, and means the cancer cells are not outside the part of the breast in which they formed and are not invading neighboring normal and healthy tissue.

Invasive tumor < 2 cm



Stage I

Is the first category for invasive breast cancer and is divided into two subcategories:

Stage IA: The tumor is 2 cm or smaller and is not in the lymph nodes

Stage IB: There are small groups of cancer cells between 0.2 mm and 2 mm in the lymph nodes with either no tumor or a tumor up to 2 cm

Tumor is 2-5 cm



Stage II

Identifies invasive breast cancer and is divided into two subcategories:

Stage IIA: there is no tumor in the breast but cancer cells larger than 2 mm are in axillary lymph nodes (the lymph nodes under the arm) or in the lymph nodes near the breast bone (found during a sentinel node biopsy); OR there is a tumor 2 cm or smaller in the breast and it has spread to the axillary lymph nodes; OR the tumor in the breast is between but not spread to the lymph nodes.

Stage IIB: There is a 2-5 cm tumor in the breast and small groups of breast cancer cells between 0.2 mm and 2 mm in the lymph nodes and/or cancer has spread to 1 to 3 axillary lymph nodes or to lymph nodes near the breastbone; OR the tumor is larger than 5 cm but has not spread to the axillary lymph nodes.



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Tumor is > 5 cm



Stage III

Identifies invasive breast cancer and is divided into three subcategories:

Stage IIIA: Cancer is found in 4 to 9 axillary lymph nodes or in the lymph nodes near the breastbone either with a tumor in the breast of any size or no tumor; OR there is a tumor in the breast larger than 5 cm and small groups of breast cancer cells between 0.2 mm and 2 mm in the lymph nodes; OR the tumor in the breast is larger than 5 cm and cancer has spread to 1 to 3 axillary lymph nodes or to the lymph nodes near the breastbone.

Stage IIIB: There is a tumor in the breast of any size and it has spread to the chest wall and/or skin of the breast and caused swelling or an ulcer and may have spread to up to 9 axillary lymph nodes OR may have spread to lymph nodes near the breastbone.

** Inflammatory breast cancer is typically considered at least stage IIIB, no matter the size of the tumor.*

Stage IIIC: There may be no sign of cancer in the breast or, if there is a tumor, it may be any size and may have spread to the chest wall and/or the skin of the breast and the cancer has spread to 10 OR more axillary lymph nodes or the cancer has spread to lymph nodes above or below the collarbone or the cancer has spread to axillary lymph nodes or to lymph nodes near the breastbone

Tumor spreads to other organs



Stage IV

Identifies invasive breast cancer and is divided into three subcategories:

Is any cancer that has spread to other parts of the body, known as metastases, no matter the size of the tumor, the lymph node status, or other factors. This is also known as metastatic breast cancer or advanced breast cancer and is the most advanced stage of breast cancer.

HEALTH LITERACY IS KNOWING YOUR CANCER STAGE

This is one of the items on the Tigerlily Top 10 Health Literacy Checklist.

It is important you know your stage (I, II, III, or IV), how aggressive the cancer is (grade), and tumor size/location(s) (if applicable). Having this information will help you to ask the right questions and be your best advocate in choosing treatment options.



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