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**Support for self-
managed follow-up
for breast cancer**



Patient information

Support for self- managed follow-up for breast cancer



Excellent patient care, together

Why have you given me this leaflet?

You have been given this leaflet to explain the stratified follow-up programme which West Hertfordshire NHS Trust has put in place for patients who have been treated for breast diseases, including cancer.

What is open access follow-up?

Open access follow-up (OAFU) is a new type of follow-up that West Hertfordshire NHS Trust. It is where routine, clinical examination appointments are replaced by a system through which patients can call us when they have a problem, so they don't have to come to hospital at times when they are feeling well and symptom-free.

Why are you introducing open access follow-up?

We have introduced OAFU patients often find traditional clinical appointments are a source of anxiety and can lead to them being tempted to put off reporting worrying signs and symptoms if a routine clinical appointment is 'not too far away'.

Also, it's been proved that new problems are unlikely to be picked by clinical examination alone. Most are identified by patients themselves, in between routine appointments

Will I continue to have routine mammograms?

Yes. Unless it has been otherwise specified at the end of your treatment, you will continue to be called for yearly mammograms for at least five years after your treatment, or until you are the right age to join the national NHS Breast Screening Programme. If, as a result of your specific treatment, you do not need to have annual mammograms, you will be told this, and so will your GP.

Are there any other regular tests that I may need to have?

Following your treatment you and your GP will be told if you need any additional regular checks, such as bone density scans (DEXA scans). These scans can tell us if you are developing bone thinning which could lead to a condition called osteoporosis.

Are you the only hospital to have OAFU?

No, more and more hospitals across the country are changing the way patients are followed up after treatment for breast cancer and have been running it successfully for many years.

How the OAFU works

You will have a consultation at the end of your treatment with a breast care nurse and will be taught how to be body and breast aware, including the specific symptoms that you should report without delay to your breast care nurse. They will give you the direct telephone number on which you can contact the breast care nurses with any symptoms and concerns.

You will also be given written information on:

- Your diagnosis and medication
- The treatment you have had and the possible side effects
- Signs and symptoms to report
- Arrangements for annual mammograms (and bone density scans if appropriate)
- The process your breast care nurse will follow if you need to be booked back into clinic at any time in the future.

Will I still be able to access the breast service in the event of any concerns?

You can call the breast care nurses on their dedicated Breast care support telephone number if you have any queries or problems, and you will be encouraged to do so. The Breast Care nurse's telephone number is monitored between:

Monday to Thursday 9.00-17.00

Friday 9.00 - 16.00

You will be given a telephone appointment so that a breast care nurse can assess you.

If she feels that it would be appropriate for you to come back to clinic to be seen you will be offered a clinic appointment.

How to contact us

Breast Unit

St Albans Hospital

West Hertfordshire NHS Trust

Waverley Road

St Albans

Hertfordshire

AL3 5PN

Breast Care Telephone number: **01727 897 562**

PALS

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Language



Large Print



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Concerns, complaints or suggestions

If you are unhappy with your experience or would like to give feedback, please contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). PALS is available to patients, relatives, carers and friends to raise concerns.

For more information, please scan the QR code or visit our [website](#).

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