

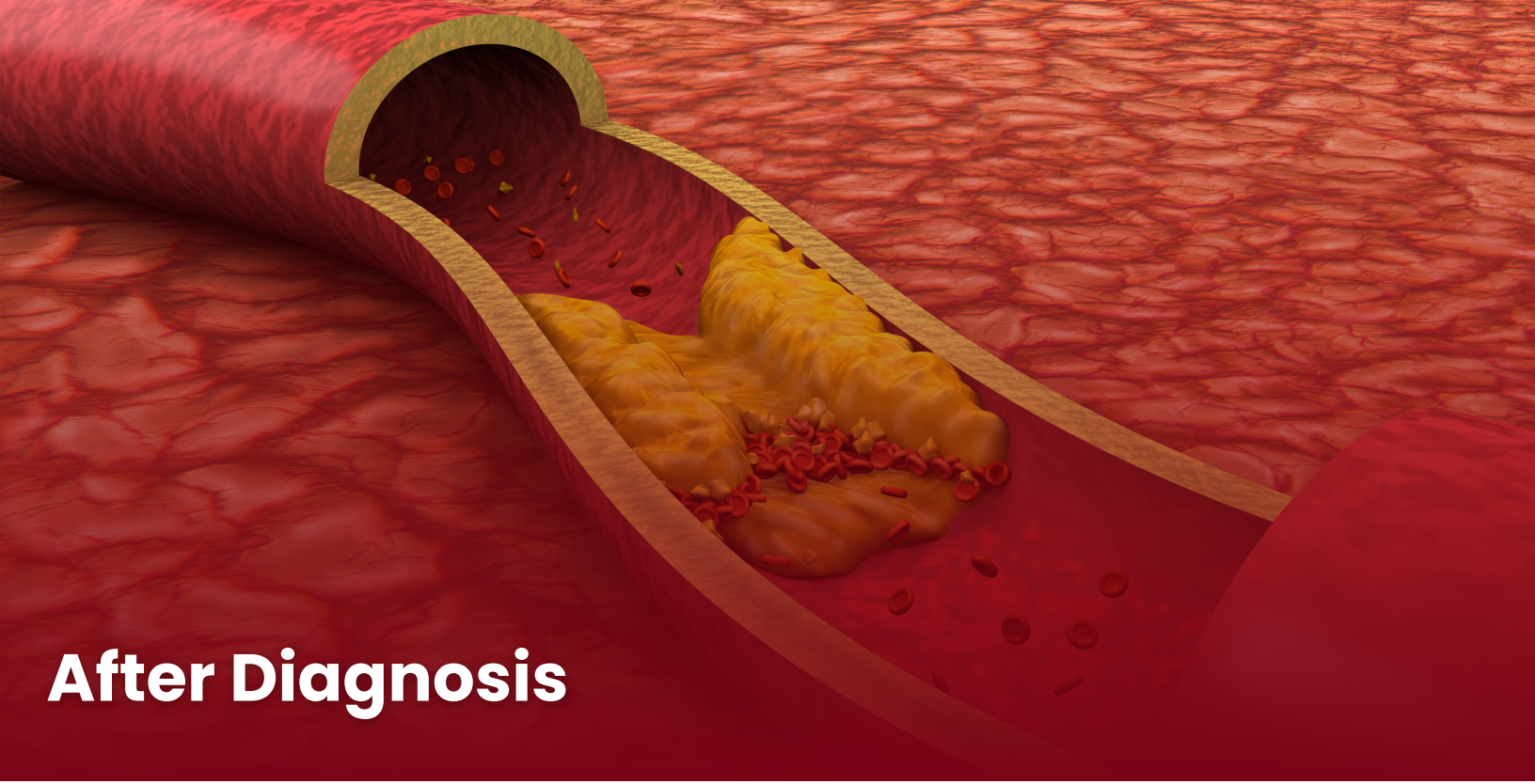


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RESTORE: Hope In Action

Resource Guide on Your First Steps After a Stage IV
Breast Cancer Diagnosis





After Diagnosis

Hearing that your breast cancer has spread and turned into stage IV - sometimes called metastatic breast cancer (mBC)- can feel overwhelming. Many women describe those first days as a “rollercoaster” of fear, sadness, and confusion. Please know you are not alone. More than 168,000 people in the U.S. are living with stage IV breast cancer today. Treatments can help you live longer and maintain a good quality of life. It’s okay to cry, pray, or lean on your loved ones. Healing is about your heart and mind, too—not just your body.

“People don’t understand what mBC is, and they think it means automatic death. I’ve had many challenges through this journey, but my children keep me grounded.”

— Juanita, mBC patient



What Does It Mean When Your Breast Cancer Spreads

When breast cancer spreads outside the breast, it may reach different parts of the body, like the bones, lungs, liver, or brain. At this point, it is called Stage IV, or metastatic breast cancer (mBC). While it can't be cured, it can be treated, and many women live for years with Stage IV breast cancer. Doctors check your receptor status to see how your cancer grows. Receptors are like “switches” on the cancer cell, they can be on or off:

Hormone Receptors (HR)

Estrogen (ER) or Progesterone (PR).
If these are “positive (+),” your cancer uses hormones to grow. You can see it as HR+, or HR- if it's negative.

HER2

A protein that makes cells grow fast. If this is “positive (+),” HER2 drives the cancer. You can see this as HER2+, or HER2- if it's negative.

The doctor looks at the status of both “switches” to figure out your treatment plan. There are different mixtures of the receptor status: HR+/HER2-, HR+/HER2+, HR-/HER2+, or HR-/HER2- (also called triple negative). Don't hesitate to ask your doctor to explain your results in simple language. Ask your doctor: “What is my receptor status? What does it mean for my treatment?”

First Steps After Diagnosis

Walking into your first appointment after diagnosis can be stressful. These steps can help:



Bring Support

Take a family member or friend to listen, write notes, and remind you later.



Get a Second Opinion

Your health is worth another perspective.



Write It Down

Use a notebook or your phone to track what your doctors say.



Lean on Faith & Community:

Prayer, spiritual care, and peer support are powerful tools.



Ask for Clarity

No question is too small. Ask: “Can you explain that in plain words?”

Questions to Take to Your Next Appointment

- What type of breast cancer spread do I have?
- Where has it spread?
- What are my treatment options?
- What side effects should I expect?
- Can I join a clinical trial?
- How will treatment affect my daily life and family?
- How will treatment affect my intimacy?
- What should I do if I notice new symptoms?
- Are there resources in Spanish?
- Can I get help with financial or insurance problems?
- Are there support groups for women of color with Stage IV breast cancer?



Talking To Your Doctor

Black and Latina women often deal with doctors who don't fully listen or rush through care. Your questions are valid. Your care team should respect and hear you. You are the leader of your care team. It's okay to switch doctors, ask for breaks, or request changes to your care plan.

Here are Some Tips for Strong Communication

- Say: “I don’t understand. Can you explain again?”
- Bring a list of your questions.
- Ask about side effects early to plan for family, work, and daily life.
- Advocate for yourself. Respect is not optional, it’s the bare minimum.
- Take your time and don’t feel ashamed to ask any questions.

This journey will have hard days, but also days of joy, hope, and connection. You are living with Stage IV breast cancer—not dying from it. Take it one step at a time. Choose care that honors your story and your culture.

“We aren’t dying of mBC — we are LIVING with mBC!”

— Patti, mBC patient





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