

BREAST CANCER TREATMENT



Immediate, comprehensive cancer treatment

Docrates Cancer Center specialises in the diagnosis, treatment and follow-up care of cancer. Located in Finland's capital, Helsinki, this state-of-the-art cancer centre is conveniently located offering direct access from major cities. Diagnosis and treatment can begin without delay – a vitally important factor in cancer treatment.

Stage 1 Diagnosis

The diagnosis stage starts with an appointment with an oncology specialist. Usually at this point the patient has been diagnosed with cancer following a mammography or an ultrasound examination, or she has found something suspicious in her breast. The doctor assesses the patient's situation and, if necessary, recommends further examinations. Typically required further examinations include needle biopsy, performed in conjunction with an ultrasound examination, and/or magnetic resonance imaging (MRI).

From the very first appointment with a doctor, the patient has a designated personal doctor. The counseling nurse at Docrates ensures that the treatment process runs as quickly and smoothly as possible. The nurse helps the patient with practical matters and provides information and psychological support. The patient may wish to have a consultation with a physiotherapist specialising in cancer patients. During the consultation, her situation will be assessed and she will receive preoperative instructions.

Stage 2 Surgery

Surgery is the primary treatment option for patients with localised breast cancer. Through Docrates patients can have the operation without delay.

Sentinel lymph node mapping and any other necessary examinations are performed at Docrates before the operation. The specialists at Docrates recommend preoperative magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) for cancer staging. The operation is performed by Docrates' partner hospitals.

The surgical team at the operating hospital and the patient's personal doctor and counseling nurse at Docrates work together as a team to ensure that surgery is carried out promptly and with optimal results. If the cancer is small the breast can be conserved. In some cases, breast removal (mastectomy) is necessary. The breast can be reconstructed during the operation or once the treatments have been completed, depending on the patient's situation at the outset.

After the surgery, a pathologist will thoroughly examine the malignant tumour that has been removed and determines the cancer type. Important factors with regard to recurrence risk and the choice of treatment include the degree of malignancy of the tumour, the expression of hormone receptors on the cell surface, the cell proliferation rate and the potential expression of HER-2.

An appointment with a physiotherapist (for manual lymph drainage therapy, for example) can be arranged after the operation. The physiotherapist can provide home care instructions on matters such as improvement of mobility in the operated area, scar care and general well-being.



IMMEDIATE, COMPREHENSIVE CANCER TREATMENT



Appointment

Diagnosis

Treatment planning

Treatment

Follow-up

← 1-2 DAYS → ← 1 WEEK → ← 1-24 WEEKS → ← 2-5 YEARS →

Stage 3 Chemotherapy and radiotherapy

If the tumour characteristics suggest an increased risk of cancer recurrence, the use of adjuvant treatments after surgery are recommended to minimise the risk. Many patients need and have these adjuvant treatments. In addition, depending on need, so-called staging can be performed to ensure that there is no cancer tissue elsewhere in the body. The need for staging depends on the characteristics of the excised tumour, the patient's symptoms and whether the cancer has spread to the axillary lymph nodes in the armpit. Whole-body computed tomography (CT) is the most common examination for the staging of breast cancer. Examination of the abdominal area can sometimes be complemented with an MRI scan. Docrates also performs FDG and FES-PET-CT scans which represent the most advanced technology and are used in special cases. Today, a fluoride PET-CT scan can be performed instead of scintigraphy (bone scan).

After the operation, the doctors at Docrates will recommend any necessary chemotherapy. The recommendation is made individually on the basis of the latest research data and national and international treatment guidelines. Depending on each individual case, the chemotherapy includes cytostatic chemotherapy and/or endocrine therapies and possibly biological drugs. Cytostatic chemotherapy usually involves six sessions of intravenous chemotherapy, administered at three-week intervals. Endocrine therapies are often referred to as hormonal therapies. The purpose of endocrine therapy is to block the effects of female sex hormones on any hormone-dependent cancer cells. The treatment is given in tablet form and the tablets are usually taken daily for five years. Chemotherapy is associated with varying adverse effects. We pay particular attention to their prevention and treatment.

Breast-conserving surgery is practically always followed by subsequent radiotherapy. Radiotherapy significantly reduces the risk of localised cancer recurrence and prolongs survival. If cancer cells are detected in the removed lymph nodes, radiotherapy of the armpit and the supraclavicular fossa above the clavicle is also recommended. Postoperative adjuvant radiotherapy usually takes four to six weeks. Treatment is administered five days a week. Each session takes about 15 minutes.

The information provided by advanced imaging studies, together with cutting-edge radiotherapy equipment, allows us to minimise the adverse effects of treatment and yet deliver a higher dose of radiation to the tumour. At Docrates Cancer Center, radiotherapy is always planned by a team consisting of a doctor, a radiographer and a medical physicist.

Stage 4 Follow-up

Regular follow-up after the treatments is essential. At Docrates Cancer Center, the patient always meets her personal doctor at individually scheduled follow-up appointments. At Docrates, further examinations are available without delay, should you experience any symptoms or concerns that require further assessment after your treatments.

In order to maintain an optimal quality of life, a holistic approach addressing all aspects of the cancer patient's health and well-being is essential. The Health and Recovery Center at Docrates Cancer Center provides top experts who are thoroughly familiar with the treatment of cancer patients. An expert in cancer recovery can help the patient to draw up a recovery plan that meets her individual needs. Recovery from breast cancer is typically supported with manual lymph drainage therapy, sexual therapy and medical nutrition therapy.

In advanced breast cancer, treatment plans are made on a case-by-case basis.

