

Breast  
Cancer  
Network  
Australia



SUPPORT  
THAT MAY HELP

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## About Breast Cancer Network Australia

Breast Cancer Network Australia (BCNA) is the peak organisation for all people affected by breast cancer in Australia. We provide a range of free information resources, including our My Journey online tool, booklets, fact sheets, videos and podcasts. Our free magazine, *The Beacon*, is issued twice each year and includes stories from people sharing their experiences, as well as information on a wide range of breast cancer issues.

We welcome and celebrate the diversity of our members.

Visit our website **[bcna.org.au](http://bcna.org.au)** for more information, to sign up to the My Journey online tool or to connect with others through BCNA's online network. Our cancer nurses are available on our Helpline - call **1800 500 258**.

Breast cancer not only affects your health, it can also make everyday life more difficult. While you are having treatment, you may not feel well enough to do the things you normally do for yourself or for others. Many women worry about their health, their family and money when they have breast cancer.



BCNA encourages women to look after themselves and to ask family members and friends for help. Some women find this hard to do when they are usually the ones who are looking after others.

*I cannot look after myself until I understand who is going to take the children to school, who is going to clean the house. When that is organised I can start to think about my own health. – Le*

This booklet tells you about some of the organisations that can help you with money and other things that you might need. Your nurse or social worker can also help you to find out about some of these things.

## Money

If you have a low income or are unable to work because you have breast cancer, you may be able to get payments from Centrelink.

Talk to Centrelink or a social worker at the hospital where you are getting treatment as early as possible. If you are eligible to receive payments it may take time for the money to be given to you.

## Where to get help

For more information about Centrelink payments, visit the Centrelink website: **[www.humanservices.gov.au](http://www.humanservices.gov.au)**



If you would like to read information in a language other than English you can click on your language in the tab at the top of the page. Or you can phone **13 12 02** to speak to someone in your language.

*When I had the operation, my husband stayed home for five weeks. We had young children. It was very hard for us financially.*  
- **Juan**



## Breast prostheses

A breast prosthesis is something that can be worn inside your bra to give you the shape of a breast. After surgery, you might find that wearing a breast prosthesis helps you to feel more confident. Some women do not wear a breast prosthesis. It is up to you.

### Soft form prostheses

A soft form prosthesis is a soft padded pillow that can be worn inside your bra in the days and weeks after a mastectomy. They come in different sizes.

## Where to get help

BCNA has a My Care Kit that you can get for free after breast cancer surgery. The My Care Kit contains a bra and a soft form prosthesis.

To find out more about the My Care Kit visit BCNA's website: **[www.bcna.org.au](http://www.bcna.org.au)**

Your breast care nurse can order you a My Care Kit with a bra and soft form from BCNA. If you don't have a breast care nurse, you can phone BCNA on **1800 500 258**.

If you need an interpreter please phone **13 14 50**.



## Silicone prostheses

A silicone prosthesis can also be worn inside your bra. It looks like the shape of a breast and feels like the weight of a breast. You can be fitted for a silicone prosthesis to suit your shape. The cost for silicone prostheses ranges from \$150 to \$500 each.

Large department stores such as Myer sell silicone prostheses, or you can phone BCNA Helpline (**1800 500 258**) for other places that sell them in your area.

Women who have had a mastectomy can claim up to \$400 (or \$800 if you have had a double mastectomy) every two years for the cost of a prosthesis resulting in little or no out of pocket expense. Claims can be made through Medicare. If you have private health insurance, ask your insurer how much money they will give back to you. Medicare will pay the rest, up to a total of \$400.

## Where to get help



To claim your reimbursement (get money back) after you have paid for a silicone prosthesis, you need to fill in the reimbursement form and send the form to Medicare. You can get more information and the reimbursement forms from the Medicare website: **[www.humanservices.gov.au](http://www.humanservices.gov.au)**

You can also phone the BCNA Helpline for more information on **1800 500 258**.

## Wigs

If you have lost your hair from chemotherapy you may want to wear a wig. A wig supplier can help you choose a wig. Wigs can cost from \$80 to many hundreds of dollars. Some Cancer Councils and other organisations run wig libraries where you can borrow wigs for free.

Some women prefer to wear a scarf or a hat while their hair is growing back. Some women don't wear anything on their heads. It is up to you.

### Where to get help



Ask your nurse, social worker, the Cancer Council (phone **13 11 20**) or BCNA Helpline (phone **1800 500 258**) if they know where you can get wigs.

BCNA has more information in English. You can order the fact sheet called Hair loss during breast cancer treatment by phoning **1800 500 258**. Or if you need an interpreter, phone **13 14 50**.

We can post it to you in the mail or you can download it from our website: [www.bcna.org.au](http://www.bcna.org.au)



## Skin care, hair care and make-up

Look Good ... Feel Better is an organisation that runs workshops for women undergoing treatment for cancer. These free three-hour workshops help women to learn about skin care, make-up, wigs, hats and scarves. They are usually run at cancer centres, hospital oncology units, Cancer Council offices and other venues in the community.

### Where to get help

To find a workshop near you visit the Look Good ... Feel Better website: [www.lgfb.org.au](http://www.lgfb.org.au)



## Speaking with other women

Many women say that it helps when they speak with other women who have had breast cancer. Talking to someone who has been through a similar experience can give you hope, encouragement and information.

## Where to get help

### Cancer Connect

Cancer Connect is a program at the Cancer Council where you can call and speak to a trained volunteer who has also had cancer. Some Cancer Connect volunteers speak languages other than English. Phone the Cancer Council on **13 11 20** and ask about the Cancer Connect program.

### Support groups



There may be a support group near you where you can go and talk with other people who have had cancer. Ask the Cancer Council if there is a support group near you. They might also know of support groups who speak languages other than English.

You can also visit BCNA's website: [www.bcna.org.au](http://www.bcna.org.au)

### Online support

BCNA has an online network where you can connect with people who have been affected by breast cancer from all around Australia on the internet. Everyone is welcome to join the online network. At the moment the online network is in English only. [www.bcna.org.au](http://www.bcna.org.au)



## Counselling

Women often say it helps to speak with a counsellor or psychologist. A Mental Health Plan from your GP can help to pay for up to 10 counselling sessions with a psychologist. Speak with your doctor about a GP Mental Health Plan before you make an appointment with a counsellor.

### Where to get help

Your doctor or nurse can help you find a counsellor or you can search for a counsellor through the Australian Psychological Society website: **[www.psychology.org.au](http://www.psychology.org.au)**



## Travel for treatment

If you live far away from the hospital you may be able to get some money to help pay for your travel and accommodation. Ask a social worker or nurse at the hospital where you are getting treatment. They may be able to help you to get these payments.

## Where to get help

BCNA has more information in English about payments for travel in the fact sheet called Patient Assisted Travel Schemes (PATS). To get a copy of this fact sheet phone **1800 500 258**, or if you need an interpreter phone **13 14 50**. We can post it to you in the mail or you can download it from our website: **[www.bcna.org.au](http://www.bcna.org.au)**



You can also get more information from the Department of Health website: **[www.health.gov.au](http://www.health.gov.au)**

The Cancer Council also has more information about how to access these payments. Phone the Cancer Council on **13 11 20** to find out more.



## Home help

Your local council may be able to provide help with house cleaning, gardening and child care.

### Where to get help

Ask a social worker or nurse at the hospital where you are getting treatment. They may be able to help you to organise home help. Or you can call your local council directly.



## Travelling overseas

Travel insurance covers you for losses, illness or injuries when you travel.



### Where to get help

BCNA has more information in English about travel insurance in the fact sheet called Travel insurance - For women with early breast cancer. To get a copy of this fact sheet phone **1800 500 258**, or if you need an interpreter phone **13 14 50**. We can post it to you in the mail or you can download it from our website: **[www.bcna.org.au](http://www.bcna.org.au)** .



## Local services

BCNA has a service finder to help you find breast cancer related support and services in your local area. The service finder is in English.

### Where to get help

Visit BCNA's website: **[www.bcna.org.au](http://www.bcna.org.au)**





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## More information

Breast Cancer Network Australia (BCNA) is the peak organisation for Australians affected by breast cancer. We have more information about breast cancer, including some information in other languages, that you can order or download from our website.

Phone BCNA on **1800 500 258**

Visit our website **[www.bcna.org.au](http://www.bcna.org.au)**

If you need an interpreter, phone **13 14 50**