

UNDERSTANDING THE IMPORTANCE
OF BONE HEALTH WHEN LIVING WITH
METASTATIC BREAST CANCER

### IF YOU'VE BEEN DIAGNOSED WITH METASTATIC BREAST CANCER (ALSO KNOWN AS STAGE IV BREAST CANCER).

it's important to pay special attention to your bone health and talk to your doctor about the serious bone problems\* that you need to consider when your cancer has spread to your bones.¹ Having bone metastases is not uncommon when your cancer spreads.² In fact, 73% of women who had advanced metastatic breast cancer had bone metastases.³ Bone metastases put you at risk for serious bone problems that can limit your daily functioning, so it's important for you to speak with your care team about your treatment goals.³.4

# ASK YOUR DOCTOR IF YOU ARE AT RISK FOR SERIOUS BONE PROBLEMS

#### **KNOW THE FACTS:**

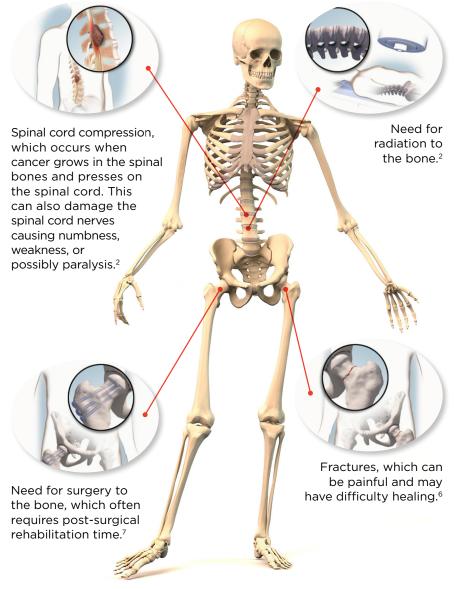
METASTATIC BREAST CANCER AND BONE HEALTH Metastatic cancer refers to cancer that has spread from where it started to another part of the body.<sup>5</sup> In women with metastatic breast cancer, cancer cells often settle in the bone and start growing, resulting in bone metastases.<sup>2</sup> Once the cancer spreads to the bones, there is a risk of developing serious bone problems.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>\*</sup> Serious bone problems are: broken bones (fractures), need for surgery to prevent or repair broken bones, need for radiation treatments to the bone, and pressure on the spinal cord (spinal cord compression).

# THE IMPACT OF PROGRESSIVE DISEASE ON BONE HEALTH

The spine, hip, upper leg, upper arm, ribs and skull are the most common sites of bone metastases.<sup>2</sup>

When breast cancer spreads to the bones, patients are at risk of developing serious bone problems\* that can make it difficult to complete everyday activities.<sup>3,4</sup> Serious bone problems are:



<sup>\*</sup> Serious bone problems are: broken bones (fractures), need for surgery to prevent or repair broken bones, need for radiation treatments to the bone, and pressure on the spinal cord (spinal cord compression).<sup>1</sup>

## IF YOUR CANCER HAS SPREAD TO YOUR BONES

IT'S IMPORTANT TO KNOW THAT bone pain is not always a reliable indicator for the risk of serious bone problems\*.<sup>8</sup> As such, it is <u>very important</u> to have ongoing conversations with your doctors and nurses about your bone health and how it plays into your overall treatment goals.



Bone scans can help show if the cancer has spread to the bones and sometimes, bone metastases may be found before they have a chance to cause symptoms.<sup>2</sup> It's important for women living with metastatic breast cancer to be aware of the potential for serious bone problems.<sup>3</sup> Ask your doctor if you are at risk for serious bone problems. Your doctor will work with you to schedule a bone scan.

<sup>\*</sup> Serious bone problems are: broken bones (fractures), need for surgery to prevent or repair broken bones, need for radiation treatments to the bone, and pressure on the spinal cord (spinal cord compression).

# MAKE BONE HEALTH A PRIORITY WHEN LIVING WITH METASTATIC BREAST CANCER



BE INFORMED. Being aware of bone health and working with your doctor to set a treatment plan that reflects your needs and goals is important. Some key questions to discuss with your doctor include:

- » Am I at risk for serious bone problems\*?1
- » What can I do to help prevent serious bone problems?
- » Should I have a bone scan and if so, how often?
- » Where can I go for more information?



BE PROACTIVE. If your healthcare team hasn't mentioned bone health, be sure to ask about it and get answers to all of your questions.



COMMUNICATE. Make sure that all members of your healthcare team-oncologists, other doctors, nurses and caregivers-are fully informed of your treatment plan and goals.



RECRUIT A SUPPORT TEAM. The support of friends, family, a counselor or clergy can help you manage living with cancer, especially if bone pain limits your daily activity.

\* Serious bone problems are: broken bones (fractures), need for surgery to prevent or repair broken bones, need for radiation treatments to the bone, and pressure on the spinal cord (spinal cord compression).

#### Helpful resources

- Breastcancer.org (<u>www.breastcancer.org</u>)
- Sharsheret (<u>www.sharsheret.org</u>)

#### References

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