

E D U C A T I O N A L   B O O K L E T   S E R I E S

# Facing Cancer

## as a Frum Woman



SHARSHERET®

The publication of this booklet was made possible  
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# Facing Cancer

as a Frum Woman

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## GET TO KNOW SHARSHERET

Sharsheret supports young Jewish women and families facing breast cancer and ovarian cancer at every stage—before, during, and after diagnosis.

Our name, Sharsheret, means “chain” in Hebrew and represents the strong, nurturing connections we build to support Jewish women and their families at every stage of breast cancer and ovarian cancer. We help women and families connect to our community in the way that feels most comfortable, taking into consideration their stage of life, diagnosis, or treatment, as well as their connection to Judaism. We also provide educational resources and create programs for women and families to improve their quality of life.

We understand that young Jewish women have unique concerns when it comes to breast cancer and ovarian cancer, and we are the only organization that specializes in serving them. Our programs are easy to access. From Boro Park to Miami Beach, Hancock Park to Lakewood, Sharsheret is wherever you are.

Sharsheret is a growing community of women and families. Together, we are creating a chain of strong links that reaches across the country so that no woman or family of Jewish descent needs to face the challenges of breast cancer or ovarian cancer alone.

Visit **[www.sharsheret.org](http://www.sharsheret.org)** or call us at **866.474.2774** to participate in our programs and to become a link in the Sharsheret chain. All inquiries are confidential and answered by qualified staff who can help.

## OUR PROGRAMS

### The Link Program®

- **Peer Support Network**, connecting women newly diagnosed or at high risk of developing breast cancer or ovarian cancer one-on-one with others who share similar diagnoses and experiences
- **The Margot Rosenberg Pulitzer and Sheri Rosenberg Kanter Embrace™ Program** supporting women living with advanced breast cancer or recurrent ovarian cancer
- **Genetics for Life®**, addressing hereditary breast cancer and ovarian cancer
- **Busy Box®**, for parents facing breast cancer or ovarian cancer while raising children or teens
- **The Bella Chachky Diamond and Sylvia Diamond Geller Best Face Forward® Program**, addressing the cosmetic side effects of treatment
- **Best Face Forward 2.0** providing services and financial subsidies to enhance women's quality of life
- **The Spungen Foundation Family Focus® Program**, providing resources and support for caregivers and family members
- **Ovarian Cancer Program**, tailored resources and support for young Jewish women and families facing ovarian cancer
- **Sharsheret Supports™**, developing local support groups and programs
- **Thriving Again™**, providing individualized support, education, and survivorship navigation for young breast cancer survivors

### Education and Outreach Programs

- **Health Care Webinars**, on issues unique to younger women and Jewish women facing breast cancer and ovarian cancer
- **Sharsheret on Campus™**, outreach and education to students on campus
- **Sharsheret Educational Resource Booklet Series**, culturally relevant publications for Jewish women, their families, and health care professionals

## YOU ARE NOT ALONE

A diagnosis of breast cancer can be overwhelming for any woman. For Jewish women, its grip may extend to family, community, dating, fertility, marriage, parenting, and religious life. Though you may confront many of the same issues as other women facing breast cancer, it can feel like a lonely journey.

You are not alone. Thousands of Jewish women are living with breast cancer today — juggling medical appointments as they struggle with concerns about breast cancer genetics, cope with the impact of a breast cancer diagnosis on their family and careers, or prepare spiritually and physically for the holidays. Their experiences are reflected in these pages.

This booklet raises awareness about the issues Orthodox Jewish women may face in their fight against breast cancer and the resources available to help address those concerns. These pages highlight some of the difficulties shared by women who have called Sharsheret for information and support. You may identify with some of the issues addressed in this guide, while others may not be relevant to you. Whatever they may be, your questions and concerns are likely shared by others in the Sharsheret community.

Sometimes we need information and support beyond what our family and friends can provide. The Resource Directory in this booklet will help you identify many Jewish organizations and cancer organizations that are available to you as well as to your family and friends. This booklet is not intended to provide comprehensive medical information, but many of the breast cancer organizations listed in the Resource Directory can help you locate information you may need over time. The Resource Directory is organized by subject so that you can easily access the organizations that will be most useful in addressing your particular needs.

Be assured that regardless of where you are in your journey with breast cancer, Sharsheret is here to support you, your family, and friends.

**Your own questions and concerns are likely shared by others in the Sharsheret community.**

## BREAST CANCER GENETICS

“My grandmother and aunt were both diagnosed with breast cancer. When I was diagnosed, I wanted to understand more about hereditary breast cancer so that I could determine the next steps for me. Then I began to worry about my sisters and my daughters. With the information I have gathered, I can begin to make important decisions for my family.” — Chava

Like Chava, many Jewish women contact Sharsheret with concerns about a history of breast cancer or ovarian cancer in their family. No study to date has shown that breast cancer is more common in Jewish women than in the population at large. However, more Jewish men and women carry genetic alterations such as BRCA 1, BRCA 2, ATM, CHEK2, PALB2 or Lynch Syndrome, any of which may predispose you to a variety of cancers including breast, ovarian, male breast, colon, pancreatic, prostate, uterine, and melanoma.

Specifically, 1 in 40 individuals of Ashkenazi Jewish descent, compared to 1 in 345 individuals in the general population, carries an alteration in what are referred to as the BRCA1 or BRCA2 genes. These alterations can be passed on through either parent to the next generation. Scientists are beginning to study the hereditary nature of breast cancer and ovarian cancer in families of Sephardic Jewish descent as well. While not all women who carry an altered gene will develop breast cancer

or ovarian cancer, recent studies suggest that the risk that someone who carries an altered gene will develop breast cancer over her lifetime may be as high as 82% and for developing ovarian cancer as high as 44%.

**Alterations in BRCA1 and BRCA2 genes can be passed on by either parent to the next generation.**

Sharsheret’s certified genetic counselor can help you understand your family history and its impact, if any, on your surgery and treatment decisions. You can also find a list of additional resources for breast cancer genetics in the Resource Directory on page 22 of this booklet.

## PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

“My instincts told me to ‘stay private.’ I worried that I would be labeled as someone who was tainted. I would peek through the window of the doctor’s office to see if I knew anyone before I went in. I didn’t want to be pitied and I didn’t want people talking about me. The stress of keeping private was almost worse than being sick. I never appreciated people and the power of connecting to others — it is tremendously healing.” — Aliza

Living in a close-knit community can be a wonderful source of support for those facing illness. For some women though, breast cancer is an experience they would prefer to approach privately. Others are concerned about the impact of a cancer diagnosis on their place in the community – their own marriage prospects or those of their children. For you, privacy and confidentiality may be a critical component of support. At the same time, you may recognize the benefits of connecting with family members, friends, and others who have shared a similar experience.

There are breast cancer organizations and Jewish organizations, including Sharsheret, that offer resources and support with the degree of confidentiality you require. If you, like Aliza, are concerned about confidentiality, consider asking the organizations you contact to specify the ways in which they can accommodate your privacy needs. If you prefer not to receive Sharsheret labeled envelopes in the mail, we will

arrange to ship materials to you in plain white envelopes. You can choose to use only your first name or a name of your choosing when contacting us. If you prefer not to share your name or to speak with other women who live in your own neighborhood, we will respect these requests as well. When we call you, we can use discretion if leaving a message with another person or on your voicemail.

**Privacy and confidentiality may be a critical component of support for you.**

Sharsheret can also help you find the balance in your life between the need for confidentiality and the need for community support. We want you to feel free to share with us any other privacy concerns that you might have. Many women in the Sharsheret **Peer Support Network** have experienced these concerns and we can connect you with one who will be happy to share her story and how she found balance between privacy and support.



## COMMUNITY SUPPORT

“It was uncomfortable to accept help from friends and family, but ultimately very important. I had the opportunity to feel the love and support that comes from the community. And I knew that no matter how I was feeling, there would always be someone to take care of me and my family. I was not alone, and knowing that was a very comforting feeling.” — Sarah

As women, many of us experience difficulty asking for assistance and support when we need it. We tend to think of ourselves as the ones who take care of others. As part of a community that values *chesed*, *tikun olam*, *bikur cholim*, and *tzedakah*, asking for help or accepting assistance can often be even more difficult for a Jewish woman facing breast cancer. Some of the women in the Sharsheret community describe how uncomfortable it can feel to be on the receiving end of another person's good deeds. Others take comfort in being part of a close-knit community that will offer to prepare meals, tend to children, and help with shopping and housekeeping. Understanding that friends and family members feel empowered when they are useful to you can often make their offers of assistance easier to accept.

If you are in need of community support during breast cancer treatment, you can contact the Bikur Cholim organizations in your area. Many of these organizations offer assistance with meals, transportation, hospital visits, child care, counseling, and home care. For a state-by-state

listing of Bikur Cholim organizations, visit the Partners in Health/Bikur Cholim website listed in the Resource Directory on page 22 of this booklet.

Another resource you may find helpful is the Jewish Family and Children's Agency which provides social services to children, adults, and the elderly in the Jewish and general community. Links to your local Jewish Family and Children's Agency can be found on the Association of Jewish Family and Children's Services website listed in the Resource Directory on page 21 of this booklet. Some Jewish Family and Children's Agencies have partnered with Sharsheret to provide breast cancer and ovarian cancer support groups and programs in their local communities.

Sharsheret offers assistance to those in your support system through our **The Spungen Foundation Family Focus®** program. Available to family and friends, our staff provides guidance and additional resources to the people who are there for you.

## LIVING SINGLE

“When I was first diagnosed, I panicked. Who will marry me? Will I ever be able to have children? I felt overwhelmed by having to manage the breast cancer ordeal without a partner. When you have a spouse, you have a sounding board – someone with whom to discuss treatment decisions and surgery options, someone to care for you when you cannot care for yourself. It made all the difference when I realized that there were other young single women out there living and thriving with breast cancer, women I could speak with over the telephone who could help me understand what to expect.”  
— Rivka

Breast cancer can feel overwhelming for a woman at any stage of life.

Facing cancer as a single Orthodox Jewish woman, like Rivka, can raise a series of unique challenges. Single women who have called Sharsheret have done so to discuss a host of issues. Some of those issues include:

- Establishing a consistent support system of friends and family members
- The difficulty of possibly moving back home to be cared for by loved ones
- When and how to tell a *shadchan* or prospective partner that you have or have had cancer
- Concerns about the impact of breast cancer treatment on fertility and the ability to biologically parent a child

- Wearing a wig, hair covering, or hat during chemotherapy, generally a sign of marriage
- Support groups that are sensitive to the unique needs of single women
- Outreach programs in Orthodox communities that focus on the needs of single women

If you would like to talk to other single women in Sharsheret’s community to learn how they handled some of these issues, we can connect you with a member of our **Peer Support Network**. Often, being able to share your concerns with someone else who has faced similar challenges can be very helpful.

## MARRIAGE

“Surgery had a serious impact on my body image and sense of self-esteem. I was concerned that my husband might share an unspoken aversion to my body after surgery, and I was fearful of my reactions to his feelings. Cancer treatment also disrupted the *niddah* cycle which entailed yet another adjustment to our marriage. We both worried about the future of my health. I found it very reassuring when we were both able to discuss our feelings openly.” — Bina

A diagnosis of breast cancer can impact a marriage. Busy with medical appointments and often fatigued as a result of treatment, many women find that they do not have the time or energy that they are accustomed to spending in their relationships. Spouses may need to assume additional household or child care responsibilities. Some women express concerns that their husbands require support, but do not have others with whom they feel comfortable discussing breast cancer. Changes in one's physical appearance as a result of surgery or chemotherapy may affect body image. These feelings can be difficult to discuss with a husband and may affect intimacy, both emotionally and sexually, as they did for Bina.

There are breast cancer organizations and Jewish organizations that can address your concerns about the impact of breast cancer on life with your spouse. Many organizations

can provide direct support to your husband, or provide you with resources that may be helpful to share. Others can provide household help or child care assistance. You can find a list of these organizations in the Resource Directory on page 22 of this booklet.

The Sharsheret community includes many other women who have dealt with the issues surrounding marriage. Perhaps their experiences can help you put yours in perspective. Contact us to get connected to someone in our **Peer Support Network** who has shared your concerns. Our **The Spungen Foundation Family Focus®** program is also available to provide support and additional resources to your husband.

## FERTILITY, PREGNANCY, AND NURSING

“When I was first diagnosed, I was afraid I was going to become infertile and childless. Before chemotherapy, I visited doctors and asked important questions about the impact of breast cancer treatment on my fertility. I made decisions that I feel good about. It was an extremely stressful time, but I know I did the best research I could.” — Talia

The emphasis in Jewish tradition on the importance of family makes the impact of breast cancer on fertility a particularly important concern for Jewish women, both single and married. Prior to beginning treatment, you may have questions about your ability to have children after cancer treatment.

Like Talia, you may find it helpful to explore these questions with your doctor prior to making health care decisions. Many women begin treatment with questions about their ability to have children after cancer, particularly after they learn that chemotherapy can induce premature menopause. Others are concerned about the effects of chemotherapy agents on subsequent pregnancies. Some women are concerned about the effects of breast cancer treatment during pregnancy or while nursing, and about the effects of pregnancy on the recurrence of breast cancer. If a woman has had a mastectomy, she may be saddened about the loss of the ability to nurse her baby. Still others may be concerned about possible hereditary aspects of their breast cancer and what this might mean for their children — both boys and girls.

In addition to speaking with your doctor, there are cancer organizations, Jewish organizations, and fertility organizations that can help you understand the impact of breast cancer treatment on fertility and your family planning options beyond breast cancer. You can find a list of these organizations in the Resource Directory on page 23 of this booklet. Questions of *halacha* during breast cancer treatment are best addressed by your rabbi, who will answer these questions with sensitivity to your unique medical situation.

**The importance of family in Jewish tradition makes the impact of breast cancer treatment on fertility a particularly important concern.**

At Sharsheret, we are sensitive to concerns about fertility, pregnancy, and nursing and can connect you with other women in our **Peer Support Network** who have faced these issues. Their experiences can help you better understand your own.

## PARENTING

"I had five young children when I was diagnosed with breast cancer. My big concern was continuing my energetic lifestyle; being there for homework, eating dinner together, giving them their baths. I didn't know what to tell my children and I worried about how my illness and treatment would affect their lives. Ultimately, I put a lot of effort into keeping their lives normal. Although there were days I felt very tired, I made it my focus to save my energy for the Mommy moments." — Chani

For many women like Chani, questions about how to best parent through breast cancer are of significant concern. Some women seek guidance about discussing breast cancer with young children and teenagers or how to keep up with an active family life when not feeling well. Other women who are eager to keep their diagnosis private look for help in addressing the needs of their children through cancer treatment and beyond. Still others have concerns about what their hereditary breast cancer diagnosis might mean for their children or how and when to discuss this issue with them.

There are cancer organizations that can help you determine the best ways to approach cancer with your family, and Jewish organizations that can provide family counseling and guidance at little or no cost to you. You can find a list of these organizations in the Resource Directory on page 22 of this booklet.

Sharsheret offers the **Busy Box®**, which provides children and teens with materials and activities and helps support parents facing breast cancer or ovarian cancer. You can also talk to other members of Sharsheret's **Peer Support Network** who have dealt with similar concerns, can share their experiences with you, and will provide you with support as you work through these important parenting concerns. You may also find *How Do We Care for Our Children?*, a Sharsheret symposium transcript available on our website, to be helpful. If you do not have access to the internet, you can call our office to request a copy.

**You can set the tone for how your children respond to your cancer diagnosis.**

## JEWISH LAW

“I had many questions of *halacha* when preparing for surgery, reconstruction, and the impact of breast cancer on my ability to have children. The rabbi was very sensitive to all of my concerns.”

— Batya

As a Jewish woman living with breast cancer like Batya, you may face a number of questions of *halacha* during the course of your treatment. These questions may include:

- How do I arrange a hospital stay or treatment appointment that is to take place on *Shabbat* or *Yom Tov*?
- What are the *halachic* implications of tattooing, when done as part of breast reconstruction or radiation treatment?
- How can I ensure the appropriate degree of *tzniut* related to head-covering and hospital gowns during a hospital stay?
- How do I prepare to return to the *mikvah* after surgery or during chemotherapy?
- When should I have my name placed on or removed from a list of those for whom *tehillim* are recited?

Questions of *halacha* during or beyond breast cancer treatment are best addressed by your rabbi, who will answer these questions with sensitivity to your unique medical situation. It is important for you to share your religious views with your doctor if they are influencing your health care decisions.

Sharsheret can help by connecting you with other women in our **Peer Support Network** who have experienced some of the same concerns during breast cancer treatment. The information they provide may help you address some of your own concerns.

**Be sure to share your religious views with your doctor if they are influencing your health care decisions.**

## SPIRITUALITY AND WELL-BEING

“Throughout my diagnosis and treatment, I found myself asking: What is there to learn from these challenges? How can I feel anchored when thoughts are racing through my head? In grappling with these questions, I discovered that my spiritual life helped carry me through.” — Esther

Positive feelings, comfort, and strength gained from spirituality can contribute to a sense of well-being. Improving your spiritual health may help you feel better and help you cope with the stress of treatment.

A breast cancer diagnosis may prompt you to ask life’s ultimate questions and to begin a quest for meaning. The nature of this emotional and spiritual journey is fluid — finding meaning in this journey can mean embracing the range of emotions you experience and accepting that there will be times when you feel less connected spiritually, and other times, more connected.

Like Esther, many Jewish women facing breast cancer have found support in speaking to rabbis or other Jewish communal leaders about incorporating spirituality, Jewish tradition, and ritual into their lives as they cope with the emotional and physical impact of breast cancer.

There are Jewish organizations that can help you find meaningful ways to integrate spirituality and Jewish tradition into the healing process. A list of these organizations can be found in the Resource Directory on page 24 of this booklet. Additionally, through Sharsheret’s **Peer Support Network**, we can connect you with another woman with similar spiritual views who will be happy to share her experiences.

Improving spiritual health may help you cope with the stress of treatment.

## TEFILLAH

“During treatment, I sought a way to focus that would be healing. Choosing *tefillot* that were meaningful to me helped me, as I was *davening*, to envision the words nurturing my body and creating a healing environment.” — Leah

Like Leah, many Jewish women living through breast cancer turn to *tefillah* for a sense of spirituality and healing during treatment and beyond. Through *tefillah*, women often describe feeling more hopeful about the future, more centered in their life circumstance, and more connected to their community. There are times though, when a woman may find it difficult to focus on a specific *tefillah*. Whether engaged in formal *tefillah* or using your own words, this reflective and quiet time can feel very grounding.

Some women turn to a rabbi or spiritual leader for assistance in selecting meaningful *tefillot*. Other women have selected *tefillot* they find particularly comforting or that hold personal significance for them. Family members and friends may feel empowered by organizing a *tefillah* group and many community groups gather to recite *tehillim* for those facing breast cancer. Hosting a *seudat hoda'ah* can mark a closure to treatment and a beginning to healing.

A list of organizations offering spiritual support during illness can be found in the Resource Directory on page 24 of this booklet. Jewish spiritual leaders in your community may also provide meaningful guidance. Through Sharsheret, you can speak with other women in our **Peer Support Network** who share views similar to yours and have found *davening* meaningful during their breast cancer journey.

*Davening* may also provide a quiet and reflective time to center yourself and find your balance.



# CELEBRATING HOLIDAYS

“I began chemotherapy treatment right around the time of *Rosh Hashanah*. It was challenging to prepare for guests when I felt numb and disconnected from the routine of Jewish life. But that year, my *tefillot* took on greater meaning as I *davened* for healing, for health, and for a long life of celebrations. Though the holidays brought with them a roller coaster of emotions — fear, anxiety, and sadness — they also created some moments of true calm and connection to the friends and family whose support proved invaluable.” — Rena

As they did for Rena, Jewish holidays can provide meaningful opportunities for family and friends to celebrate together, bringing us closer to loved ones. The holidays can also be an important time of deepening spirituality and self-reflection and a reminder of the cycle of life and the year.

Preparing for and celebrating Jewish holidays or other rituals with family and friends can create feelings of warmth and security during a time that may feel unstable. But for Orthodox Jewish women facing breast cancer, navigating the physical and emotional demands of the holidays may also make these trying times. Some women find general holiday preparations — shopping, cooking, and cleaning — physically taxing. Others may not feel emotionally ready to celebrate.

*Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*, in particular, can bring with them added anxiety about an uncertain future as the New Year approaches.

Sharsheret’s community understands the joys and demands of holiday celebrations while facing breast cancer. Call us to get connected to another member of the **Peer Support Network** who can share with you how she handled the joys and challenges of her holiday experiences.

The holidays can be an important time of deepening spirituality and self-reflection.

## WORKING DURING TREATMENT

“Continuing to work during breast cancer treatment was extremely challenging. Managing a family, a job, medical appointments, and treatments was a very complex juggling act. At times, especially during the holidays and preparing for *Shabbos*, I felt as though nothing was getting 100% of the attention it deserved.” — Aviva

Working during breast cancer treatment can be both normalizing and challenging. Like Aviva, many women find that continuing to work gives them a sense of purpose and routine in an otherwise chaotic schedule of medical appointments. For some women, it is a financial necessity. Working through treatment can also pose challenges, including sharing one’s diagnosis with employers and co-workers, juggling work responsibilities and appointments, and the impact of treatment side effects — including fatigue — on work performance. Some women have also noted the added pressure of balancing work schedules with the responsibilities of preparing for the holidays and *Shabbat* during treatment.

There are organizations that can help you, your employer, and your co-workers address some of the challenges that may arise at work during breast cancer treatment.

They offer guidance on sharing the news, managing side effects, and your rights in the workplace. You can find a list of these organizations in the Resource Directory on page 23 of this booklet.

**There are resources to help you juggle work, treatment, schedules, and your personal life.**

Sharsheret’s **Bella Chachky Diamond and Sylvia Diamond Geller Best Face Forward®** program can help ease your transition back to work by addressing some of the cosmetic side effects of breast cancer treatment. Additionally, our **Peer Support Network** can connect you with other women who have faced the challenges of juggling work, treatment, and the other demands of life.

# USING THE MIKVAH

“Using the *mikvah* for the first time after surgery was an emotional experience. Standing alone in the mirrored and brightly-lit preparation room, I was anxious about the attendant’s reaction upon seeing my scars. I carefully warned her, even though at the time it was difficult for me to discuss my diagnosis. How much more whole I felt after each *mikvah* visit, when the gentle attendants treated me just like they always had before.” — Tova

The prospect of going to the *mikvah* for the first time after surgery or during chemotherapy treatment can produce a range of emotions. The experience can be accompanied by anxiety and fear, as some women feel self-conscious and concerned about the *mikvah* attendant’s reaction to seeing their surgical scars or noticing that they have lost their hair during chemotherapy. For other women, like Tova, using the *mikvah* for the first time after diagnosis or after completing treatment can mark the beginning of healing and they view their time in the water as one of heightened spirituality or as an opportunity for reflection.

Many women find it helpful to call the *mikvah* in advance to speak with the attendant or to make arrangements for a private appointment. It can also be

comforting to recognize that *mikvah* attendants are generally sensitive to the needs of all women living with illness.

Sharsheret’s **Peer Support Network** can connect you with other women who have shared similar *mikvah* experiences and can talk with you about your thoughts, concerns, and questions.

Using the *mikvah* may produce a range of emotions.

## HOLISTIC, COMPLEMENTARY, AND INTEGRATIVE MEDICINE

“There is so much information about what to eat, the best exercise regimens, and natural remedies that I’m feeling overwhelmed. I’m trying to learn about complementary interventions, nutrition, and exercise that can contribute to my healing.” — Miriam

Judaism addresses the importance of collectively caring for our minds, bodies, and souls. Proper nutrition, exercise, and good sleeping habits are also strongly valued and contribute to a sound mind and body. Mindful meditation, yoga, and *tefillah* are other activities that some women undertake in order to help heal physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

For some women, changing lifestyle habits such as food choices, exercise, and engaging in mindful meditation are easy next steps in the pursuit of holistic health. But there may be others who feel similarly to Miriam; you know that there are complementary interventions but feel overwhelmed with the responsibility of making the right choices, or any choices at all. For many Jewish women, this is particularly true when food choices are the issue. Food is so much a part of our culture that giving up those “comfort foods” like kugel and latkes, that may not be the healthiest choices, can be a challenge.

First and foremost, it is critical to consult your medical team when making any lifestyle changes or

considering any complementary interventions. Some natural remedies or nutritional choices may interact with your medical treatments. Consult an expert when deciding on an exercise regimen. Speak with your rabbi about *tefillot* or meditations that will fill your soul. And finally, it’s important to pace yourself as you make lifestyle changes. Healthy healing means finding the right balance in these three realms of mind, body, and soul.

Resources for more information about holistic, complementary, and integrative medicine can be found in the Resource Directory on page 23 of this booklet.

**Be sure to consult your medical team when making lifestyle changes.**

## SURVIVORSHIP

“I find myself calculating how many more months there are until I no longer have to undergo breast cancer treatment. Though my efforts have been to put cancer behind me, I am learning, slowly, that it is much more important that I learn to walk comfortably beside cancer.” — Yonit

Survivorship is a many-faceted framework that includes physical, psychological, functional, social, sexual, and spiritual well-being. The term “survivor” itself raises a number of questions: When exactly are you considered a breast cancer survivor? How often do you need to see the doctor once you have survived cancer? How do you reconcile the term “survivor” with that persistent voice in your head asking, “Is it going to come back? Is it just a matter of time?” For some Jewish women, even claiming the title of survivor may be uncomfortable as it is a term often associated with the Holocaust.

For women like Yonit, who are contemplating their rights to the title “survivor,” on-going issues affecting family, friends, community, fertility, marriage, parenting, and spiritual or religious life remain a challenge. Many women feel internal pressure or pressure from others to return to being the person they were prior to their diagnosis. Often, great effort is put into maintaining normalcy during this time of life-altering changes. It’s not uncommon for women to feel emotionally intact during diagnosis

and treatment, but experience strong emotional reactions after active treatment is completed.

**Survivorship can include physical, emotional, and spiritual growth and changes.**

Sharsheret’s survivorship program, **Thriving Again™**, offers tailored support and resources, to help you navigate your unique survivorship journey.

You can also talk to other survivors in Sharsheret’s **Peer Support Network** who can help you find your “new normal” by sharing their survivorship experiences with you. Contact us to get connected with someone who understands and can address your concerns and questions.

## HOW CAN SHARSHERET HELP ME?

If you are at risk or have been diagnosed with breast cancer or ovarian cancer, we can help.

**Connect with others** who share your experience in our national Peer Support Network.

**Speak with our staff genetic counselor** about your family history or concerns about cancer risk.

**Let us help you help your children** through your cancer journey with parenting resources.

**Create** a survivorship plan tailored to your unique needs.

**Join our group** of women living with advanced breast cancer or recurrent ovarian cancer.

**Learn** how to address the cosmetic side effects of cancer treatment.

**Call us** for resources and with questions from family members, caregivers, and friends.

**Keep informed** by experts in the cancer community on our national teleconferences and webinars.

We offer transcripts of Sharsheret's helpful symposia online at **www.sharsheret.org**, covering topics such as *The Whole Picture: A Holistic Approach to Breast Health and Breast Cancer* and *Breast Cancer and the Next Generation: Caring for Our Children*. Check our website for the continually updated list of relevant transcript topics. If you do not have access to the internet, you can call our office to request copies and learn about other relevant transcripts available to you.

For more information about Sharsheret's programs, please contact us toll-free at **866.474.2774** or at **info@sharsheret.org**. Sharsheret's programs are free and are open to all women and men. All inquiries are confidential.

**Remember, wherever you are,  
Sharsheret is, and we will be there  
for as long as you need us.**

## RESOURCE DIRECTORY

### **Sharsheret**

866.474.2774  
www.sharsheret.org  
info@sharsheret.org

### **Jewish Organizations Addressing Cancer and Health Related Issues**

#### **Association of Jewish Family and Children's Agencies**

800.634.7346  
www.ajfca.org

#### **Center for Jewish Genetics**

312.357.4718  
www.jewishgenetics.org

#### **Chai Lifeline**

877.CHAILIFE  
www.chailifeline.org

#### **Hadassah, Women's Health and Wellness**

888.303.3640  
www.hadassah.org

#### **National Center for Jewish Healing**

212.632.4500  
www.jewishhealing.org

#### **Nishmat: Women's Halachic Hotline and Online Information Center**

877.963.8938  
www.yoatzot.org

#### **Partners in Health/Bikur Cholim**

845.425.7877  
www.bikurcholim.org

### **Breast Cancer Organizations**

#### **Breastcancer.org**

www.breastcancer.org

#### **Dr. Susan Love Research Foundation**

866.569.0388  
www.dsrlf.org

### **Living Beyond Breast Cancer**

888.753.5222 (Survivor's Helpline)  
610.645.4567  
www.lbbc.org

### **SHARE (Self-Help for Women with Breast or Ovarian Cancer)**

212.719.0364  
866.891.2392 (Helpline)  
www.sharecancersupport.org

### **Susan G. Komen for the Cure**

877.GO.KOMEN  
www.komen.org

### **Young Women Facing Breast Cancer**

#### **Stupid Cancer**

877.735.4673  
www.stupidcancer.org

#### **Ulman Cancer Fund for Young Adults**

888.393.FUND  
www.ulmanfund.org

#### **Young Survival Coalition**

877.YSC.1011  
www.youngsurvival.org

### **Cancer Organizations**

#### **ACOR (Association of Online Cancer Resources)**

www.acor.org

#### **American Cancer Society**

800.ACS.2345  
www.cancer.org

## Cancer Organizations

### **Cancer101**

866.638.2202  
[www.cancer101.org](http://www.cancer101.org)

### **CancerCare**

800.813.HOPE  
[www.cancercare.org](http://www.cancercare.org)

### **Cancer Hope Network**

800.552.4366 (Helpline)  
[www.cancerhopenetwork.org](http://www.cancerhopenetwork.org)

### **Cancer.Net**

888.651.3038  
[www.cancer.net](http://www.cancer.net)

### **Cancer Support Community**

888.793.9355  
[www.cancersupportcommunity.org](http://www.cancersupportcommunity.org)

### **Imerman Angels**

877.274.5529  
[www.imermanangels.org](http://www.imermanangels.org)

### **National Cancer Institute**

800.4.CANCER  
[www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov)

## Breast Cancer Genetics

### **Genetics For Life\***

**(A Sharsheret Program)**  
866.474.2774  
[www.sharsheret.org](http://www.sharsheret.org)

### **Bright Pink**

312.787.4412  
[www.brightpink.org](http://www.brightpink.org)

### **FORCE: Facing Our Risk of Cancer Empowered**

866.288.7475  
[www.facingourrisk.org](http://www.facingourrisk.org)

### **National Society of Genetic Counselors**

312.321.6834  
[www.nsgc.org](http://www.nsgc.org)

## NCI Cancer Genetics Services Directory

800.4CANCER  
[www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/genetics/directory](http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/genetics/directory)

## Family and Friends

### **Busy Box\***

**(A Sharsheret Program)**  
866.474.2774  
[www.sharsheret.org](http://www.sharsheret.org)

### **Family Focus\***

**(A Sharsheret Program)**  
866.474.2774  
[www.sharsheret.org](http://www.sharsheret.org)

### **Association of Jewish Family and Children's Agencies**

800.634.7346  
[www.ajfca.org](http://www.ajfca.org)

### **Bikur Cholim National Directory**

212.632.4730  
[www.bikurcholimcc.org/directory.php](http://www.bikurcholimcc.org/directory.php)

### **Cancer Support Community**

202.659.9709  
[www.cancersupportcommunity.org](http://www.cancersupportcommunity.org)

### **Kids Cope**

[www.kidscope.org](http://www.kidscope.org)

### **Kids Connected**

800.899.2866  
[www.kidsconnected.org](http://www.kidsconnected.org)

### **Men Against Breast Cancer**

866.547.6222  
[www.menagainstbreastcancer.org](http://www.menagainstbreastcancer.org)

### **Mothers Supporting Daughters with Breast Cancer**

410.778.1982  
[www.mothersdaughters.org](http://www.mothersdaughters.org)

### **Telling Kids About Cancer**

800.334.8571, ext. 25128  
[www.tellingkidsaboutcancer.com](http://www.tellingkidsaboutcancer.com)

### **Wonders & Worries: A Family's Illness. A Child's Journey**

512.329.5757  
[www.wondersandworries.org](http://www.wondersandworries.org)



## Fertility, Pregnancy, and Nursing

### **A T.I.M.E (Torah Infertility Medium of Exchange)**

718.437.7710 (Helpline)

[www.atime.org](http://www.atime.org)

### **Hope for Two – The Pregnant with Cancer Network**

800.743.4471

[www.pregnantwithcancer.org](http://www.pregnantwithcancer.org)

### **Myoncofertility.org**

866.708.FERT

[www.myoncofertility.org](http://www.myoncofertility.org)

### **Path2Parenthood**

888.917.3777

[www.path2parenthood.org](http://www.path2parenthood.org)

### **Resolve**

703.556.7172

[www.resolve.org](http://www.resolve.org)

## Financial Assistance

### **Angel Flight NE (travel)**

800.549.9980

978.794.6868

[www.angelflightne.org](http://www.angelflightne.org)

### **CancerCare**

800.813.HOPE

[www.cancercare.org](http://www.cancercare.org)

### **Corporate Angel Network (travel)**

866.328.1313

[www.corpangelnetwork.org](http://www.corpangelnetwork.org)

### **Rofeh Cholim Cancer Society**

718.722.2002

[www.rofehcholim.org](http://www.rofehcholim.org)

### **Zichron Shlome Refuah Fund**

718.438.9355

[www.zsrf.org](http://www.zsrf.org)

## Holistic, Complementary, and Integrative Medicine

### **American Academy of Medical Acupuncture**

[www.medicalacupuncture.org](http://www.medicalacupuncture.org)

### **American Association of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine**

[www.aaaomonline.org](http://www.aaaomonline.org)

### **American Holistic Medical Association**

[www.aihm.org](http://www.aihm.org)

### **Holistic Primary Care: News for Health and Healing**

[www.holisticprimarycare.net](http://www.holisticprimarycare.net)

### **National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health**

[www.nccih.nih.gov](http://www.nccih.nih.gov)

### **National Center for Homeopathy**

[www.homeopathic.org](http://www.homeopathic.org)

### **Office of Cancer Complementary and Alternative Medicine**

[www.cam.cancer.gov](http://www.cam.cancer.gov)

### **Oncology Nutrition**

[www.oncologynutrition.org](http://www.oncologynutrition.org)

## Insurance and Employment

### **Cancer and Careers: Living and Working with Cancer**

[www.cancerandcareers.org](http://www.cancerandcareers.org)

### **Cancer Legal Resource Center**

866.THE.CLRC

213.736.1455

[www.disabilityrightslegalcenter.org/cancer-legal-resource-center](http://www.disabilityrightslegalcenter.org/cancer-legal-resource-center)

### **Patient Advocate Foundation**

800.532.5274

[www.patientadvocate.org](http://www.patientadvocate.org)

## Physician Referral Services

### **ECHO Institute for Health**

845.425.9750

718.859.9800

### **Ezra LeMarpeh**

718.435.9788

[www.ezra-lemarpe.org/en](http://www.ezra-lemarpe.org/en)

### **Relief**

718.432.9501

[www.reliefhelp.org](http://www.reliefhelp.org)

## Managing Cosmetic Side Effects

### **Best Face Forward® (A Sharsheret Program)**

866.474.2774  
[www.sharsheret.org](http://www.sharsheret.org)

### **Facing the Mirror with Cancer**

312.550.8485  
[www.facingthemirror.org](http://www.facingthemirror.org)

### **Kimara Ahnert**

212.452.4252  
[www.kimara.com](http://www.kimara.com)

### **Lashes for Life**

888.603.0866  
[www.lashesforlife.com](http://www.lashesforlife.com)

### **Look Good Feel Better**

800.395.LOOK  
800.ACS.2345  
[www.lookgoodfeelbetter.org](http://www.lookgoodfeelbetter.org)

### **Shop Well with You**

800.799.6790  
[www.shopwellwithyou.org](http://www.shopwellwithyou.org)

### **“TLC” (American Cancer Society Catalog)**

800.850.9445  
[www.tlcdirect.org](http://www.tlcdirect.org)

## Spirituality

### **National Center for Jewish Healing**

212.632.4500  
[www.ncjh.org](http://www.ncjh.org)

### **Ritualwell**

215.576.0800  
[www.ritualwell.org](http://www.ritualwell.org)

## Survivorship

### **Thriving Again™ (A Sharsheret Program)**

866.474.2774  
[www.sharsheret.org](http://www.sharsheret.org)

### **LIVESTRONG**

866.235.7205  
855.220.7777  
[www.livestrong.org](http://www.livestrong.org)

### **National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship**

877.622.7937  
[www.canceradvocacy.org](http://www.canceradvocacy.org)

## Technology Based Resources

### **Caring Bridge**

651.789.2300  
[www.caringbridge.org](http://www.caringbridge.org)

### **MyLifeLine.org**

720.883.8715  
[www.mylifeline.org](http://www.mylifeline.org)

### **Navigating Cancer**

800.925.4456  
[www.navigatingcancer.com](http://www.navigatingcancer.com)

### **Think About Your Life**

816.695.4334  
[www.thinkaboutyourlife.org](http://www.thinkaboutyourlife.org)

Please visit Sharsheret's website at **[www.sharsheret.org](http://www.sharsheret.org)** for a continuously updated online Resource Directory.

The information contained in this booklet is intended to provide broad knowledge of available resources and should not be construed as an endorsement of any health care professional, organization, or program mentioned in the Resource Directory. All medical information should be discussed with a health care professional.

## Glossary of Terms

**Bikur Cholim** — an organization providing care for the ill and infirm; visiting the sick

**chesed** — acts of kindness and compassion

**daven** — to pray

**halacha** — Jewish law

**mikvah** — ritual bath

**niddah** — Jewish laws of family purity

**Rosh Hashanah** — Jewish New Year

**seudat hoda'ah** — celebration of thanks

**Shabbat, Shabbos** — the Sabbath

**shadchan** — matchmaker; one who is responsible for arranging dates

**sharsheret** — chain

**tefillah** — prayer

**tefillot** — prayers

**tehillim** — psalms

**tikun olam** — making the world a better place

**tzedakah** — giving to others

**tzniut** — modesty

**Yom Kippur** — Day of Atonement

**Yom Tov** — Jewish holiday

## BOOKLETS AVAILABLE IN THIS SERIES

Your Jewish Genes:  
Hereditary Breast Cancer  
and Ovarian Cancer

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Facing Breast Cancer as  
a Jewish Woman

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Facing Breast Cancer as an  
Orthodox Jewish Woman

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Facing Ovarian Cancer as  
a Jewish Woman

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Breast Cancer and the Ritual Bath:  
A Guide for Mikvah Attendants

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Our Voices: Inspiring Words from  
the Women of Sharsheret

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We are grateful to all of the women  
of the Sharsheret community who  
contributed their thoughts and  
experiences to the development of this  
booklet. Additionally, we are thankful for  
the guidance of the organizations and  
health care professionals who provided  
invaluable input.

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