

For Our Newly Diagnosed Blessties



The phone rings and it's your doctor:

“You have breast cancer.”

You are shocked, in disbelief. You think to yourself: Did they call the wrong patient? It must be a mistake... Thoughts race through your head. You don't remember the rest of the conversation. You're afraid, overwhelmed by a fear you have never felt in your entire life.

What should you do first? Just breathe. Then take another breath. Call someone who loves you.

The Blesstie club isn't one that you want to join. But now that you're here, you are unconditionally loved. We are here for you—not only to love on you and inspire you to fight like a girl, but also to provide information about Black Breast Cancer that will help you to make the many hard decisions ahead of you.

Black Breast Cancer is a unique disease, a constellation of exposures, experiences, and lack of science for Black women diagnosed with breast cancer that causes Black women to face disproportionately worse breast cancer outcomes.

Black women have a significantly different experience of breast cancer than white women—we are frequently diagnosed younger, with more aggressive disease, and with a higher likelihood of recurrence. Our bodies are different but, because of low Black clinical trial participation, the currently available breast cancer treatments have not been adequately tested on us. We don't want to scare you, but you need to know what you are up against.

We know it's hard—you're in the fight for your life. Nothing is more important than being equipped, informed, and supported in your fight.

We also know that life keeps happening all around you. Your kids are hungry, bills need to be paid. You've got so many responsibilities and now, on top of it all, you have cancer. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Accept blessings where and when you can because this battle shouldn't be fought alone. Build a support team. Try to reduce your stress. Your new mantra (recite it to yourself several times a day) is my peace is non-negotiable. Say it until you believe it.

If you need us, reach out—call, email, message, follow us.

We are here for you and our community of Black Blesstie is ready to welcome you with support, understanding, and Blesstie love.

Consider joining our private, monthly TOUCH Talk support group. We meet the first Saturday of each month at 11am on Zoom (<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84981231268>).



Here are some things to know as you prepare for your first few appointments:

- + You deserve the best care available. We believe that health equity means every medical provider should treat you like family. If your doctor can't treat you with that level of compassion, respect, diligence, and cultural competence, **know that you can always fire your doctor and we will help you find another one.** When they give you choices about treatments, ask the question, "What would you recommend for your family member?"
- + You will have a team of medical providers responsible for your care, including an oncologist, breast surgical oncologist, plastic surgeon, radiation oncologist, and others. **Your team should also include a nurse navigator, psychiatrist/psychologist, and a palliative care physician.** If you aren't automatically given these last three team members, ask for them.
- + You can't make informed decisions about your treatment if you don't understand your specific diagnosis, including the subtype, stage, and genetics. For in-depth explanations of these and other clinical details of a diagnosis, visit Living Beyond Breast Cancer or Breastcancer.org.

Subtype

If you are diagnosed with Triple Negative Breast Cancer (TNBC), please reach out to us and/or the TNBC Foundation for more resources.

Stage

If you are diagnosed with metastatic breast cancer, you are not alone. You can reach out to us and/or the MBC Alliance for more resources.

Genetic Testing

Knowing about genetic mutations—like BRCA1/2 or PDL1—helps you choose the most effective treatment plan for you. It also lets you know if breast cancer is passed down in your family.

- + It can be hard to pay attention, understand, and remember everything your doctors throw at you during the first few appointments. To make it easier, make sure you:

Bring someone to appointments with you who can listen and write down notes. Ask as many questions as you need to. Repeat things back to your doctor to make sure you understand what they are saying. ("I'm hearing you say...")

Ask your doctor about clinical trials early.

To learn more about clinical trials, visit the clinical trial section of the TOUCH website. An easy way to start the clinical trial conversation with your doctor is by asking "What clinical trials are available to me?"

