

## Patient information

# **Clinical Psychology Appointment to Talk About Risk Reducing Mastectomy**

Liverpool Cancer Psychology Service

### **Why have I been referred to Clinical Psychology?**

You have been referred to the Liverpool Cancer Psychology Service because you are thinking about having risk reducing mastectomy. This may be because you have a personal experience of cancer or because you are at higher risk of developing breast cancer due to your family history or genetic status (e.g. BRCA 1 or BRCA 2).

All women who are considering undergoing risk reducing mastectomy are referred to meet with the Clinical Psychologist.

Risk reducing mastectomy involves removing breast tissue which, as far as we are aware, is healthy. Whilst this does not eliminate the risk of cancer, it does reduce the risk. It is a big decision to remove healthy tissue and it is a major surgical procedure that cannot be reversed.

Whilst the Clinical Psychologist does not make any decisions about whether or not someone should have surgery, women can find it very helpful to talk about their thoughts, feelings and motivations about having surgery. It can be particularly helpful to speak to someone who is not a family member or friend. Having the chance to talk through the decision making process in this way in confidence hopefully means women are less likely to regret the choice they make and more likely to adjust well afterwards.

Women may be at different stages in their decision making process when they meet with the Clinical Psychologist; some are undecided whereas others are very clear that they would like to go ahead with the surgery.

### **What is a Clinical Psychologist?**

Clinical Psychologists are trained to work with people who have a wide variety of difficulties or concerns. Their work can involve meeting with people who are considering different types of surgery to talk together about the decision they are making.

Clinical Psychologists also work together with individuals who are experiencing psychological distress. This work uses psychological approaches aimed at helping people to understand the difficulties they are having.

Psychological therapy can involve helping people to make changes in the way they think, feel and cope with their difficulties.

## **What will happen at my first appointment?**

The appointment will last for up to an hour. The Clinical Psychologist will ask you about the reasons why you are considering risk reducing mastectomy.

### **This will include (where appropriate) topics such as:**

- Your personal experience of cancer and any previous breast surgery/reconstruction.
- Your experience of genetic testing (if applicable).
- Your support network.
- Your expectations of surgery and reconstruction.
- Previous psychological history.
- Your thoughts and feelings about your appearance and body image.
- Potential implications of having the surgery on day to day life (e.g. time off work, recovery, relationships etc.)

## **What happens next?**

It may be one appointment is all that is needed or sometimes these discussions may require more time and you can ask for another appointment if this will help you think about your decision making process.

Sometimes women will need more information about the surgery and the Clinical Psychologist can arrange for them to talk to the person in the medical team who can help them best.

A further outcome of the assessment process might be the need for further support or psychological therapy is identified. This could be arranged following the assessment process either with the Liverpool Cancer Psychology Service or other services which may be better placed to help you.

## **Is what I tell the Clinical Psychologist confidential?**

During the appointment, the Clinical Psychologist will make notes in a psychology file. No other doctors or nurses in the hospital see these notes. If you have hospital notes, the Clinical Psychologist will make brief notes in them to show when they met you and what the purpose of the appointment was for.

At the end of the assessment process, the Clinical Psychologist will write a letter that summarises your discussion and any agreed action points. We like to send this letter to you and also send a copy to your referrer, surgeon and family doctor (GP). You do not have to have a copy if you would prefer not to and if there is any information that you would prefer not to be included in the report, you can discuss this with the Clinical Psychologist.

## **There are two situations in which the clinical psychologist will have to break confidentiality:**

- If a court of law instructs them to.
- If you tell the psychologist something that makes them concerned that you or someone else is at risk of serious harm.

If you want to know more about confidentiality, it is a good idea to ask your Clinical Psychologist early on so they can discuss this with you and answer any questions you may have.

## **What if I cannot attend the appointment?**

We appreciate that sometimes people need to cancel appointments. Please let us know if you are unable to attend and we will endeavour to rebook your appointment to a more convenient time.

## **Feedback**

Your feedback is important to us and helps us influence care in the future.

Following your discharge from hospital or attendance at your outpatient appointment you will receive a text asking if you would recommend our service to others. Please take the time to text back, you will not be charged for the text and can opt out at any point. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

## **Further information**

**Dr Jane Hutton  
Consultant Clinical Psychologist  
Liverpool Psychology Service for Cancer  
Linda McCartney Centre  
Liverpool University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust  
Prescot Street  
Liverpool  
L7 8XP**

**Tel: 0151 706 3126  
Text phone number: 18001 0151 706 3126**

**Email: [RLB-TR.CANCERPSYCHOLOGYLIVERPOOL@nhs.net](mailto:RLB-TR.CANCERPSYCHOLOGYLIVERPOOL@nhs.net)**

**Author: Liverpool Cancer Psychology Service  
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All Trust approved information is available on request in alternative formats, including other languages, easy read, large print, audio, Braille, moon and electronically.

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در صورت تمایل میتوانيد کلیه اطلاعات تصویب شده توسط اتحادیه در رابطه با بیماران را به اشکال مختلف در دسترس داشته باشید، از جمله به زبانهای دیگر، به زبان ساده، چاپ درشت، صوت، خط مخصوص کوران، مون و بصورت روی خطی موجود است.

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