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Amber A. Guth, MD, is a breast surgeon and an associate professor of surgery at New York University Langone Medical Center.

Q: If my cancer is noninvasive, can I skip chemo?

A: Yes, you can skip it. In fact, chemotherapy is never used when breast cancer is noninvasive (also known as in situ because the cancer is trapped within the milk ducts and can't spread outside your breasts). Hormones may be recommended for treatment, but it all depends on the specifics of your case.

Print experiences are so depending on how the cancer spreads and what your stage is." (AMBER GUTH)

Q: If my cancer is invasive, is it still curable?

A: Seventy-five percent of cancers diagnosed in the United States are considered early stage—either stage 0, I, or II, and these stages are generally viewed as curable. While phase III doesn't have as high a cure rate, there are many promising treatments available today for more advanced breast cancer.

Q: What can you tell about my cancer based on its "stage"?

A: We certainly get a lot of information from knowing the stage of your breast cancer, which refers to its size and whether lymph nodes or other parts of your body are involved. But breast cancer treatment is highly individualized; we also look at other factors such as whether the cancer is hormone receptor positive or negative, the microscopic appearance, and most recently, even the genetics of a specific cancer.

Q: If my cancer is hormone receptive, what does that mean for my treatment options?

A: Hormone-receptive cancers can be treated with anti-estrogen therapies. These oral medications are usually well tolerated and do not cause the nausea, hair-loss, or fatigue seen with chemo drugs. (Breast cancer that is hormone-receptor negative tends to be more aggressive, but there are other effective options for that.)

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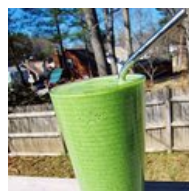
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