Ductal Carcinoma in Situ (DCIS) of the Breast

What is DCIS?

Ductal Carcinoma in Situ, or DCIS, is a cluster of abnormal cells found in a milk duct in your breast. Milk ducts are tubes that carry milk from the lobules, where breastmilk is made, to your nipple during breastfeeding. This condition is called “non-invasive cancer” or a Stage 0 breast cancer.

DCIS refers to cancer cells that are only in your milk ducts. The cancer cells have not spread outside your milk ducts or to any other area of your body. Most other breast cancers are found once they have spread to other breast tissue.

How is DCIS diagnosed?

DCIS is often found during a routine mammogram. Because of high quality mammography, a cluster of abnormal cells can be found early, even when they are too small to be felt. You may not even have any symptoms.

If your mammogram shows abnormal areas called microcalcifications (white specks), your doctor may order more diagnostic imaging.
If your mammogram is abnormal, a breast biopsy is done. This is a procedure to remove a small sample of breast tissue to be looked at under a microscope. If DCIS is found, it can be treated.

**What is the risk with DCIS?**

DCIS cells can change into cancer cells and spread to breast tissue or areas of your body. There are no tests to predict if or when DCIS cells might change into cancer cells. The goal of your DCIS treatment is to get rid of all of your abnormal cells.

**How is DCIS treated?**

You and your doctor will decide your treatment plan based on:

- Your mammogram results
- Your biopsy results
- Your breast exam results
- The location of the abnormal cells in your breast
- The area or areas of DCIS in your breast
- How much breast tissue is going to be removed

**Surgery**

If your doctor recommends surgery you may have one of the following:

- **Lumpectomy** – removal of the abnormal area and a rim of normal tissue (clear margin) around it. If abnormal cells are found in the clear margin, you may need more surgery. You may have radiation therapy after this surgery.
• **Total mastectomy** - removal of your whole breast, including your breast tissue, skin, and nipple. Your lymph nodes may also be removed and checked for abnormal cells. Your doctor may talk with you about reconstructive surgery to create a mound of tissue where your breast has been removed.

DCIS can occur in many areas in your breast, this is called “multicentricity”. If there is more than one area of DCIS in your breast, your doctor may recommend a total mastectomy to remove all the areas of these abnormal cells. It is important to remove these areas before they change into cancer cells and spread.

After your surgery, a special doctor (pathologist) will examine the tissue that has been removed to make sure DCIS has not spread to other parts of your breast. If DCIS has spread outside your milk ducts, more surgery or other treatments may be needed.

**How to prevent breast cancer after DCIS diagnosis**

• It is important to check with your doctor if you should stop:
  
  ▶ Birth control pills or shots (it is important to talk with your doctor about other birth control methods you can use)
  
  ▶ Estrogen and progesterone (pills, patches, vaginal rings or creams)
  
  ▶ Plant estrogen supplements (natural estrogen)

• Try not to eat or drink a lot of soy products, such as soybeans, soy milk, and tofu.

• Your doctor may order anti-hormone therapy pills for you to take after your surgery. This can help to protect your breast tissue and prevent breast cancer.

**Close Follow-Up**

It is important to have routine checkups after your diagnosis. This includes a mammogram each year, monthly self-breast exams and a breast exam by your doctor every 3 to 6 months. It is important for you to do self-breast exams each month and tell your doctor or nurse about any changes you may have.