

Tips for Living and Working with Metastatic Breast Cancer (MBC)



CREATE AN ACTION PLAN

- If you decide you want and/or need to continue to work, talk to your social worker and healthcare team about how to balance work and treatment. These conversations will help you prepare for conversations with your manager and HR team. Ask questions like:
 - Do you think my current responsibilities will be realistic in treatment? In what ways should I try to scale back or change my day-to-day work?
 - Do you have tips/recommendations for ways to conserve energy on my treatments?
 - Will I need to take time off? Can we work out a schedule that allows me to work?
- It may be helpful to speak with a financial advisor who can help you set spending and savings goals. You will want to walk away from these conversations with answers to the following questions:
 - Can I afford to leave my job or work part time, if needed?
 - What steps do I need to take to ensure that I will be okay financially for the next 5 years? 10 years?



UNDERSTAND YOUR EMPLOYEE RIGHTS

- Before disclosing anything, familiarize yourself with your employee benefits and short and long-term disability options.
- Consider how you can use these policies to accommodate your needs. For example, the [Family and Medical Leave Act](#) (FMLA) allows eligible employees to take up to 12 weeks off to address a serious medical condition.
- Fear of discrimination or bias may affect how you approach your diagnosis at work. It's important to understand your rights. The [American Disabilities Act](#) (ADA) and other laws are designed to prevent discrimination at work.



TALK TO YOUR EMPLOYER

- Consider the following before having a conversation with your employer.
 - **The culture** – Before you consider who you tell and how, you may want to consider your workplace and culture. Is your workplace big and formal, or small and close-knit? Has anyone else in your workplace had cancer or another medical condition, and how was it handled?
 - **How much you want to say** – No one is entitled to information about your health, and it is up to you to decide who you want to tell and how much information you want to disclose. Keep in mind that in order to request a reasonable accommodation or medical leave, you may have to disclose a medical condition — though not necessarily an exact diagnosis.
 - **Who to tell** – It's likely you'll need to first tell your supervisor and human resources department and work with them to determine any changes to your day-to-day. From there, consider which of your co-workers may need to know.
 - **Set boundaries and expectations** – It may be important to set expectations related to your role on the team, anticipated change in appearance, and other day-to-day changes that may occur.



MANAGE TREATMENT-RELATED SIDE EFFECTS

- Ask your healthcare team about how you can manage the impact of treatment-related side effects on your work through lifestyle modification, such as dietary changes or physical therapy.
- Coordinate with your treatment team and/or workplace to determine a schedule that works best. For example, if you know you receive treatment on Tuesday afternoons, ask your employer if you could potentially have those days off and make up the time on a different day.
- Keep a detailed work journal with a running to-do list. Take detailed notes during meetings and appointments so you're able to remember important details.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Cancer in Careers](#)

Visit [Cancers and Careers](#) for additional resources for people with cancer in the workplace, including guidance on [sharing the news](#) of your diagnosis with coworkers as well as detailed [legal and financial](#) information

