

UCLA Breast Center at Santa Monica



This year, more than 230,000 new cases of invasive breast cancer will be diagnosed in the United States. Breast cancer is the most common cancer among American women, with one in eight U.S. women developing breast cancer during her lifetime. While treatment advances and earlier detection through screening have caused breast-cancer deaths to decline steadily in recent years, women are still understandably frightened when faced with a diagnosis of breast cancer. More about the disease and treatment options is available online and in the community than ever before, yet those newly diagnosed with breast cancer often feel overwhelmed when faced with personal decisions about their care.

UCLA Breast Center at Santa Monica offers unique approach

As one of the nation's leading research and treatment centers, the UCLA Breast Center at Santa Monica offers a streamlined approach that allows newly diagnosed breast-cancer patients to see the entire team of specialists in one day. The UCLA team develops a personalized plan of care, and a patient navigator serves as a single point of contact to facilitate and coordinate care throughout a patient's course of treatment.

UCLA center is one of few in nation with patient navigator

Launched in June 2012, the UCLA Breast Center at Santa Monica is one of only a handful in the nation that employ a patient navigator who gathers medical reports, coordinates appointments, answers questions and serves as the patient's single point of contact for the healthcare team.

"The healthcare system can be really confusing and hard to navigate for patients, especially when they're feeling shell-shocked with a new diagnosis," says Amy Kusske, MD, the center's breast surgeon. "The patient navigator is there to facilitate and guide them through the process so they don't have to struggle to figure it out on their own."

Patients who come to the center meet with a multidisciplinary team of physicians including a medical oncologist, breast surgeon, reconstructive surgeon, radiation oncologist and psycho-social counselor. A genetic counselor is also available for consultation. Patients receive a coordinated plan of care as well as a surgery date — if indicated — by the end of their first appointment.

The streamlined approach benefits patients in many ways. When presented with authoritative information about their disease and treatment options in a timely manner, patients experience less anxiety and are able to focus their energies on getting well. Patients also benefit from the convenience of the one-day model, especially those who travel long distances to receive treatment at our center — including patients from other states.

Breast Center has a multidisciplinary team of board-certified specialists

At the core of the UCLA Breast Center at Santa Monica is a multidisciplinary team of accomplished physicians who specialize in the treatment of breast cancer. Our physicians are experts in breast surgery, reconstructive plastic surgery, medical oncology, radiation oncology, radiology and pathology. The team also includes a genetic counselor and a psychological counselor.

The Breast Center team begins the day by reviewing each case in detail, examining breast imaging studies and pathology slides. The physicians then see each newly diagnosed woman in individual consultation to discuss a personal plan of care. Our physicians have vast experience in advanced diagnostic and treatment techniques not typically offered in other healthcare settings. Our reconstructive surgeons, for instance, achieve excellent outcomes with autologous breast reconstruction, a surgical technique that uses a patient's own tissue from elsewhere in the body to create a new breast.

UCLA offers the most advanced diagnostic imaging studies available and features a number of advanced radiation therapy techniques. As part of a world-class research and teaching institution, we can offer patients the opportunity to participate in cutting-edge clinical trials aimed at improving breast-cancer diagnosis, treatment, care and prevention. Team members meet regularly to develop personalized and integrated plans of care for their patients.

Patient navigator enhances patient experience

Our patient navigator is a defining feature of the UCLA Breast Center at Santa Monica that significantly enhances the patient experience. Our patient navigator, who is trained in breast-cancer care, guides and supports patients through their diagnosis, treatment and care at the breast center and serves as their liaison to the healthcare team. With extensive knowledge of the complexities of the healthcare system, our patient navigator acts as an advocate and point of contact for our patients, collecting medical records, coordinating appointments and answering questions. The patient navigator is there to alleviate anxiety so patients can concentrate on their recovery.

Participating Physicians

Nicole Dawson, MD

Associate Clinical Professor
Pathology

Anne Hoyt, MD

Health Sciences Clinical Professor
Radiology

Sara Hurvitz, MD

Associate Professor
Medical Oncology

Amy Kusske, MD

Associate Clinical Professor
Breast Surgery

Susan McCloskey, MD, MSHS

Assistant Professor
Radiation Oncology

Charles Tseng, MD

Associate Clinical Professor
Plastic Surgery

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