



period of weeks or months. Swollen lymph nodes may also be present under the arm, above the collarbone, or in both places. However, it is important to note that these symptoms may also be signs of other conditions such as infection, injury, or other types of cancer.

How is IBC Diagnosed?

Dr. Lund – “If inflammatory breast cancer is suspected, a biopsy is performed to look for a tumor or mass. The usual protocol requires a mammogram and ultrasound of the breast tissue. In addition, a biopsy of the skin in the affected area may be required as we may find cancer in the skin as well.”

How is IBC treated?

Dr. Lund – “Inflammatory breast cancer is an aggressive cancer that requires aggressive treatment. It begins with chemotherapy and will likely include radiation therapy and surgery. As a general rule, we recommend the use of all three modalities to get at the cancer quickly.”

Are Clinical Trials (Research Studies with Patients) Available? Where Can People get more information About Clinical Trials?

Dr. Lund – “Yes, but there are few that focus only on inflammatory breast cancer, it is less common and may account for only 2-4 percent of all breast cancers. However, many of the on-going studies will allow inclusion of inflammatory breast cancer if appropriate.”

The NCI is sponsoring clinical trials that are designed to find new treatments and better ways to use current treatments. Before any new treatment can be

inflammatory breast cancer

An Interview with Dr. Lund of Rockwood Clinic

What is Inflammatory Breast Cancer (IBC)?

Dr. Lund – “Inflammatory breast cancer is a form of breast cancer that behaves in a biologically distinct manner from typical cancers. This cancer is highly aggressive and invades the lymphatic channels of the breast, causing swelling and redness. As the name suggests, the area also becomes inflamed, mimicking an infection. It is advanced at the time of first diagnosis and requires aggressive and immediate treatment.”

Inflammatory breast cancer is a rare but very aggressive type of breast cancer in which the cancer cells block the lymph vessels in the skin of the breast. It tends to be diagnosed in younger women compared to non-IBC breast cancer. It occurs more frequently and at a younger age in African Americans than in Caucasians. Like other types of breast cancer, IBC can occur in men, but usually at an older age than in women. Some studies have shown an association between family history of breast cancer and IBC, but more studies are needed to draw firm conclusions.

What are the Symptoms of IBC?

Dr. Lund – “We look for lumps in the breast, swellings, redness, tenderness, and whether or not the area is warm to the touch.”

Symptoms of IBC may include redness, swelling, and warmth in the breast, often without a distinct lump in the breast. The redness and warmth are caused by cancer cells blocking the lymph vessels in the skin. The skin of the breast may also appear pink, reddish purple, or bruised. The skin may also have ridges or appear pitted, like the skin of an orange (called peau d’orange), which is caused by a buildup of fluid and edema (swelling)

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in the breast. Other symptoms include heaviness, burning, aching, increase in breast size, tenderness, or a nipple that is inverted (facing inward). These symptoms usually develop quickly—over a

recommended for general use, doctors conduct clinical trials to find out whether the treatment is safe for patients and effective against the disease. Participation in clinical trials is a treatment option

for many patients with IBC, and all patients with IBC are encouraged to consider treatment in a clinical trial.

People interested in taking part in a clinical trial should talk with their doctor. Information about clinical trials is available from the NCI's Cancer Information Service (CIS).

What is the Prognosis for Patients with IBC?

Dr. Lund – "It is an aggressive cancer and the prognosis are not particularly glossy, but there has been progress. We hope to cure the patient with aggressive treatment. An estimated 50 percent of patients will be free of cancer and are doing well five years after treatment. Within a 20 year time frame, however, that number declines."

A recently released treatment, Lapatinib, shows positive results in cancers with certain characteristics. Another treatment, Herceptin (in the appropriate cancer), also improves prognosis.

Is this Type of Cancer Hereditary?

Dr. Lund – "Inflammatory breast cancer is not specifically linked to heritage. Hereditary breast cancers account for approximately 10-15 percent of all forms of breast cancer."

Where Can a Person find more Information About Breast Cancer and its Treatment?

Dr. Lund – "To learn more about inflammatory breast cancer, other types of breast cancer, and breast health in general please refer to the following resources:"

National Cancer Institute
www.cancer.gov
National Comprehensive Cancer
Care Network
www.nccn.org
American Cancer Society
www.cancer.org

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