



# Get Healthy after Breast Cancer



## Key Terms

### **Get Healthy Service**

*Free and confidential telephone-based health coaching offering expertise and motivation to help you set and reach goals to be a healthier you. ([www.gethealthynsw.com.au](http://www.gethealthynsw.com.au)).*

### **Feasibility**

*capable of being done or accomplished*

### **Acceptability**

*satisfactory or agreeable to the receiver*

**This project was funded by an Early Career Research grant from The University of Queensland**



## BACKGROUND

Breast cancer continues to be the most common type of cancer experienced by Australian women, with one in eleven being diagnosed before the age of 75. Survival rates are high, however, survivorship can be problematic, with many women experiencing physical and psychosocial breast-cancer related symptoms following treatment.

Evidence suggests that improvements in physical activity and diet are likely to have independent, beneficial impacts on a range of outcomes (e.g., fatigue, sleeping problems, body image, weight concerns, physical functioning) relevant to improving both the quantity and quality of survival in women with breast cancer. Unfortunately, research has shown that majority of breast cancer survivors do not meet lifestyle recommendations for physical activity or fruit and vegetable intake, and over 50% are overweight or obese. These factors are associated with higher risk for cancer recurrence and mortality and the onset or worsening of other chronic diseases (e.g., cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes).

Interventions specifically designed for women with breast cancer that target weight loss, improving physical activity and diet have been shown to be effective. But with dissemination of these programs being limited, we thought: what if we used a health coaching program offered to the general population to support women who had recently completed their breast cancer treatment?

The Get Healthy after Breast Cancer (GHaBC) pilot study assessed the feasibility and acceptability of referral to the 'Get Healthy Service' (GHS) among women who had recently completed treatment for breast cancer during follow-up visits to a breast cancer treatment clinic. The study purpose was to inform whether the GHS (without any cancer-specific adaptations) is a suitable program for lifestyle support among breast cancer survivors, and whether such referrals were acceptable within the breast cancer treatment setting.

## WHAT WAS INVOLVED

Participants received up to 10 coaching calls over a period of 6 months from qualified GHS coaches along with emails and other reminders, and access to a secure website to help them track their goals. Women were also asked to complete questionnaires at two time points in the study



## WHAT WE DID

We conducted a single group, pre-post study evaluating the feasibility and acceptability of the 6-month GHS® telephone-delivered lifestyle intervention. Participants were recruited from a publically-funded breast cancer treatment centre located in Sydney, Australia, to receive health coaching from the GHS® NSW; a free 6-month telephone-based program supporting healthy eating, physical activity, and achieving/maintaining a healthy weight. Data was collected at baseline and 6-months.

## WHAT WE FOUND?

Participants overall showed improvement in weight and physical activity outcomes. Significant results were observed at 6-months where participants lost on average 2.4 kg, increased walking by 34 mins/week, engaged in vigorous physical activity 12 mins/week and total physical activity of 55 mins/week. No significant changes in daily fruit or vegetable serves were observed. We also found significant improvement in the mental component of quality of life from baseline to 6-months.

The majority (92%) of the participants rated the GHS® highly, highlighting that accountability to the health coach, as well as the support and encouragement received was an important part of the service provided.

## IMPLICATIONS

**Evidence shows that the GHS® referral is feasible, acceptable and effective for a diverse group of women following completion of treatment for breast cancer. Furthermore, it highlights the need to integrate referral pathways to lifestyle support programs in cancer survivorship care. Future studies may explore how to best integrate referral pathways for such services within current follow-up models of care.**

## FIND OUT MORE

If you have questions about our study, or would like to find out more please contact Genevieve Maher on email [g.maher1@uq.edu.au](mailto:g.maher1@uq.edu.au)

## WHO PARTICIPATED

*Fifty-eight consented to participate in the study, 53 commenced the Get Healthy Service program and 33 completed.*

*Participants were female, with a mean age of 57 years, recruited approximately 14 months after diagnosis.*

*Almost half were born outside of Australia, half had no post-school qualification, and a third reported English as a second language. Half of the participants were employed in some capacity.*

*Almost all of the participants had surgery along with an adjuvant therapy, nearly three-quarters were receiving endocrine treatment.*

## Our Partners

