About the Oncotype DX® Test

This information explains the Oncotype DX® test and answers frequently asked questions about the test.

What is the Oncotype DX test?

Oncotype DX is a test done that may predict how likely your breast cancer is to return and if you will benefit from having chemotherapy in addition to hormone therapy. The test results can help you and your doctors make a treatment plan that’s right for you.

This test can be done on early-stage breast cancers (stage I or II) that:

- Have receptors for estrogen (estrogen-receptor positive)
- Don’t have large amounts of the human epidermal growth factor protein (HER2 negative)

When should I have the Oncotype DX test?

You should have the test done when you and your doctor agree that the test results will be helpful for making decisions about chemotherapy treatment.

How is the Oncotype DX test done?

For this test, a piece of cancer tissue that was removed during your surgery is examined. A group of 21 genes in this tissue are measured to see if they act in a way that makes your tumor more likely to return.

What will I learn from the Oncotype DX test?
This test may help predict if your cancer will return and if getting chemotherapy will improve your chances that the cancer will not come back. This test can help you and your doctor decide if the benefits of chemotherapy outweigh the risks.

What is a recurrence score?

Your test results include a recurrence score that tells you how likely your cancer is to come back. The score ranges from 0 to 100.

**Score 0 to 17: Low recurrence score**

- A low recurrence score is 17 and under.
- If you have a low recurrence score, the chance that your cancer will return is low.
- This also means that the benefits of chemotherapy may not be worth the risks for you.
- A low recurrence score does not mean that your cancer will definitely not come back.

**Score 18 to 30: Medium recurrence score**

- A medium recurrence score is 18 to 30.
- If you have a medium recurrence score, the chance that your cancer will return is in the medium range.
- The benefits of chemotherapy for you are uncertain. Your doctor will discuss with you what this means.

**Score 31 to 100: High recurrence score**

- A high recurrence score is 31 or over.
- If you have a high recurrence score, the chance that your cancer will return is somewhat high.
- Adding chemotherapy to your cancer treatment may help keep the cancer from coming back.
A high recurrence score does not mean that your cancer will definitely come back.

How long will it take to get the results of the Oncotype DX test?

Your cancer tissue will be sent to a special laboratory, where it will be analyzed. It will take about 2 weeks for your doctor to get the results. You will then be able to discuss the results with your doctor.

Is the test covered by insurance?

Most insurance companies cover this test. Your insurance company will be contacted for approval by the company that runs the test.

If I don’t need chemotherapy, do I still need hormone therapy?

If your cancer cells are estrogen-receptor positive, your doctor may advise you to take either tamoxifen or an aromatase inhibitor. These medications can help stop the growth of tumors by blocking estrogen or lowering the amount of estrogen in your body.

If you have any questions, contact a member of your healthcare team directly. If you're a patient at MSK and you need to reach a provider after 5:00 PM, during the weekend, or on a holiday, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

About the Oncotype DX® Test - Last updated on April 13, 2018
©2020 Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center