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PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

# About the Oncotype DX<sup>®</sup> Test

This information explains the Oncotype DX<sup>®</sup> test and answers frequently asked questions about the test.

## What is the Oncotype DX test?

The Oncotype DX is a test that may predict how likely it is that your breast cancer will return. It also predicts whether 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 1 or 2) 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 and what will I learn from it?

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 analyzed to help determine prognosis (how likely your breast cancer is to return) and if getting chemotherapy will improve your chances that the cancer will not come back.

# What is a recurrence score?

Your test results will include a recurrence score from 0 to 100.

## **Score 0 to 25: Low recurrence score**

- A low recurrence score is 25 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 side effects for you.
- A low recurrence score doesn't mean that your cancer will definitely not come back.
- For some young people, chemotherapy may still be recommended with recurrence scores under 25.

## **Score 26 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 higher.
- Adding chemotherapy to your cancer treatment increases the likelihood that the cancer will not come back.
- A high recurrence score doesn't 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. The company that runs the test will contact your insurance company for approval.

## 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 (such as Nolvadex® or Soltamox®) 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](http://www.mskcc.org/pe) to search our virtual library.

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