

## *Amina*

*This is a fictional patient whose story is based on the real-life experiences of women with secondary breast cancer.*

**Age:** 48

**Summary:** Amina was diagnosed with secondary breast cancer of the bones 2 years after finishing treatment for primary breast cancer. She has been living with secondary breast cancer for 2 years and is currently on anastrozole (Arimidex) and trastuzumab (Herceptin).

Amina lives with her young daughters and husband, who are struggling with her diagnosis. She has taken ill health retirement and prefers seeking support from and socialising with her own friends, rather than attending support groups.

### *Amina's story*

Amina has been living with secondary breast cancer in the bones for 2 years. The diagnosis came as shock. She had finished treatment for primary breast cancer 2 years previously and, though she occasionally worried that it would one day return, she had been feeling in great health.

She is currently taking anastrozole (Arimidex) and trastuzumab (Herceptin) and much prefers this combination to the chemotherapy she had for her primary breast cancer. The most significant side-effect for her has been tiredness. At times this can be extreme, affecting her ability to go about her daily routine and care for her family. She has found it difficult trying to slow down as she is used to 'running around' and looking after everyone. Up until recently, Amina was still working part time as a GP receptionist but found that this was taking up time and energy that she wanted to use with family, friends and for herself. She sought some financial advice from Citizens Advice and her pension provider and has since been able to take ill health retirement.

She suffers with pain in her lower back and hip, though has been able to better manage this over time with regular pain relief. Whilst she was initially reluctant to take extra medications, getting on top of her pain has really allowed her to carry on with life as usual and, at times, to forget about her cancer. She also finds Denosumab injections really help, though the effect lessens in the weeks after treatment. Her consultant has suggested that they may consider radiotherapy further down the line to help with controlling her bone pain and Amina feels positive about this option.

Amina lives with her husband and daughters (aged 12 and 14) who are extremely supportive though they are reluctant to discuss her secondary breast cancer in too much detail. She worries that they need to be more aware of her prognosis and about what might happen in the future. She recently spoke to her oncologist about this, who directed her to local support services and gave her some leaflets and information to share with her family when they are ready.

When Amina was first diagnosed with secondary breast cancer, she wanted to plan as far ahead as possible. The more she was unable to do this, the more anxious she felt. Now, she tries to take each day as it comes and to focus on the present. Amina prefers to seek support from her own friends rather than attending support groups, though does sometimes look on forums if she wants to get a sense of what other women in her situation are experiencing. She does this with caution, however, as this can sometimes trigger her anxiety. Reading about negative and distressing experiences of others

can cause her to worry about what the future might hold. Spending time with her own friends and family helps her to take her mind off secondary breast cancer and to hold on to a sense of normality.

If you are experiencing anything similar to Amina, there is lots of information and guidance on the LIBERATE website which you may find useful. Please follow the links below.

- ❖ [Support for others](#)
- ❖ [Case studies](#)
- ❖ [Employment & finances](#)
- ❖ [Looking ahead](#)
- ❖ [Psychological well-being](#)