Invasive Breast Cancer

The American Joint Committee on Cancer’s TNM staging system is the standard system used to classify breast cancer.

The TNM staging system is based on T, for tumor; N, for spread to the lymph nodes; and M, for metastasis (spread to distant tissues or organs). Additional letters or numbers, which provide more details of the tumor, lymph nodes or metastasis, may follow the TNM stages.

**STAGE T:**

- **T0:** No evidence of primary tumor.
- **T1:** Tumor is 2 cm (3/4 inch) or less in diameter.
- **T2:** Tumor is more than 2 cm but less than 5 cm (2 inches) in diameter.
- **T3:** Tumor is more than 5 cm in diameter.
- **T4:** Tumor is any size and has grown into the chest wall or skin, or has been diagnosed as inflammatory breast cancer.
**STAGE N:**

N0: Cancer has not spread to nearby lymph nodes.

N1: Cancer has spread to 1 to 3 underarm lymph nodes and/or to the internal mammary lymph nodes found by sentinel lymph node biopsy.

N2: Cancer has spread to 4 to 9 underarm lymph nodes or has enlarged one or more internal mammary lymph nodes.

N3: Described as one of the following:

- Cancer has spread to 10 or more underarm lymph nodes with at least one area measuring more than 2 mm. (N3a)
- Cancer has spread to the lymph nodes under the collarbone with at least one area measuring more than 2 mm. (N3a)
- Cancer has spread to one or more underarm lymph nodes with at least one area measuring more than 2 mm, and has enlarged one or more internal mammary lymph nodes. (N3b)
- Cancer has spread to four or more underarm lymph nodes with at least one area measuring more than 2 mm, and to the internal mammary lymph nodes found by sentinel lymph node biopsy. (N3b)
- Cancer has spread to the lymph nodes above the collarbone with at least one area measuring more than 2 mm. (N3c)

**STAGE M:**

M0: No spread to distant tissues or organs is found on imaging procedures or by physical exam.

M1: The cancer has spread to distant tissues or organs, with the most common sites being bone, lung, brain and liver.