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**TITLE:New treatments help women fight breast cancer**

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 HEADLINE:New treatments help women fight breast cancer  
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 TEXT:October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, when attention is focused on the most common cancer among women. The estimated incidence in 2007 for breast cancer now is 180,510, and estimated deaths will be 40,910.  
 If caught early, however, breast cancer can be readily treated and often cured.  
 Years ago, the only treatment for breast cancer was surgical removal of the entire breast, known as mastectomy. Now, doctors can allow most women with early-stage cancer to keep their breasts by performing a lumpectomy or surgical removal of the tumor only and following up with radiation therapy and sometimes chemotherapy.  
 Studies have shown that breast-conserving surgery plus radiation therapy is just as good as a mastectomy and may be preferred by many women. After a lumpectomy, most patients will undergo external beam radiation therapy, which involves a series of daily outpatient treatments to accurately deliver radiation to the entire breast. Each treatment lasts less than 30 minutes; treatments are given five days a week for five to seven weeks.  
 In a few parts of the country, doctors are testing ways to deliver radiation to only the part of the breast where the tumor was removed. This is called breast brachytherapy and involves placing flexible plastic catheters or a balloon into the breast. These catheters are then connected to a machine, which delivers high doses of radiation therapy to the lumpectomy site. The treatment is given over one week as opposed to six weeks.  
 Radiation oncologists also are testing ways to deliver external beam radiation to only part of the breast or to give radiation during surgery. These new treatments still are being studied and are not recommended for everyone.  
 Talk to your radiation oncologist for more information or to see how you can take part in a clinical trial studying these techniques.  
 Patients often experience little or no side effects from radiation therapy and are able to continue normal routines. Possible side effects can include skin irritation, similar to a sunburn, breast swelling and fatigue.  
 Before undergoing any treatment for breast cancer, talk with several cancer specialists, including a radiation oncologist, to find out what treatments are available for you.

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