

Researchers ask women to share experiences of breast cancer in online survey

June 5 2014

Women over the age of 35 who have been treated for breast cancer are being invited to take part in an online questionnaire exploring how they feel about their appearance. The views of around 250 women are being sought, and the online survey can be accessed [here](#). The study is being conducted until the end of June 2014 and the survey can be completed anywhere and at any time.

The project aims to help develop better ways to support women who are faced with the challenges of an altered appearance.

Due to higher rates of detecting [breast cancer](#), there are growing numbers of women living with the consequences of the disease and its treatment. Many women with breast cancer have to come to terms with treatment-related appearance alterations including hair-loss, weight gain, mastectomy, and scarring. For some, these changes can have a profound impact on [body image](#) and may cause great distress.

Appearance dissatisfaction due to treatment-related appearance changes has been identified amongst many women with breast cancer, as illustrated by one woman who has already participated in the study: "I was not prepared for the havoc surgery and chemotherapy would wreak on my body, my strength, my stamina and my appearance. I went from being slim, attractive and fit to fat, unattractive and unable to get fit no matter how much exercise I do and that is very difficult to live with."

Helena Lewis-Smith, a PhD researcher at UWE Bristol's Centre for

Appearance Research, who is conducting the survey, said, "We know that many women experience body image issues and face multiple pressures in society to meet appearance ideals. Between 55-75% of [adult women](#) are unhappy with their appearance, primarily with their weight, waist, hips, buttocks, and thighs.

"Women who have been diagnosed and treated for breast cancer might also face additional barriers to feeling positive about their appearance. This study is therefore important to explore the nature and influences of appearance concerns amongst this group.

"This novel research will therefore inform ways of helping women with breast cancer with concerns specifically related to their treatment, in addition to the body image issues which many adult [women](#) face."

Provided by University of the West of England

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