

## REVIEW ARTICLE

# A Review on Conventional and Alternative Treatments for Breast Cancer

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## ABSTRACT

Breast cancer is the most prevalent form of cancer among women globally and is the second leading cause of cancer-related deaths. There are two primary approaches to treating cancer: conventional and alternative treatments. An estimated half of cancer patients utilise alternative treatments as their initial treatment, thus this review aimed to determine the conventional and alternative treatments for breast cancer. Conventional treatments for breast cancer typically include chemotherapy, radiotherapy, and surgery. The most commonly used regimen is doxorubicin combined with cyclophosphamide. Breast cancer at an early stage is a very treatable disease, with current conventional treatments such as surgery combined with radiation and adjuvant drugs. Alternative treatments for breast cancer encompass a wide range of healthcare practices that are not part of conventional medicine and are not fully integrated into the dominant healthcare system. These may include herbs, acupuncture, and detoxification diets. The combination of complementary and alternative medicine is effective in improving physical and mental recovery, boosting the immune system, and reducing the adverse effects of conventional treatment. In conclusion, conventional treatments have shown higher survival rates, while alternative treatments may alleviate side effects. Further research is required to validate the efficacy and safety of alternative treatments.

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## INTRODUCTION

Breast cancer is defined as a disorder where abnormal cell growth within the breast leads to tumor formation, which, if left untreated, can spread throughout the body and be fatal (1). Breast cancer is the most prevalent form of cancer among women globally and the second highest cause of cancer-related deaths. Although less common, men can also develop breast cancer, accounting for around 1% of all breast cancer cases, and it is typically estrogen-receptor positive (2). The mortality rate for women with invasive breast cancer is 3%, while the rate for all breast cancer cases is 13% (3). Breast cancer is one of the top five causes of death in Malaysia, along with other leading causes (4). The Malaysia National

Cancer Registry (MNCR) data from 2012 to 2016 reveals that the majority of breast cancer diagnoses were at stages III and IV (4). Cancer remains a major global health challenge, ranking as the second leading cause of death worldwide with an estimated 9.7 million deaths reported in 2022. In Malaysia, the burden of cancer has similarly intensified, becoming the third most common cause of death in 2022 with 15.2 thousand recorded cases, an increase from its position as the fourth leading cause in 2021. Between 2017 and 2021, breast cancer represented the most frequently diagnosed cancer in Malaysia, accounting for the highest incidence among women. Its predominance places it ahead of all other malignancies in the national cancer profile, underscoring its significant impact on population health (5).

There are two primary approaches to treating cancer: conventional and alternative treatments. Conventional treatment for breast cancer refers to evidence-based medical approaches that have been scientifically tested