

# UW Carbone Cancer Center: UW study: Online tools help women prepare for breast-cancer surgery decisions

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**MADISON, Wis.** — A University of Wisconsin Carbone Cancer Center researcher found that women who had access to online educational materials came to their first meetings with their breast-cancer surgeons better prepared to make decisions.

Dr. Heather Neuman, associate professor of surgical oncology, wanted to know if receiving online information prior to the surgeon visit helped women understand their options and clarify their priorities. Her study looked at 309 women with early-stage breast cancer. Before their initial meetings with a surgeon, they were sent an email that linked to either a high-quality cancer web site, such as the American Cancer Society's [cancer.org](http://cancer.org), or to an online decision aid that included videos, text explanations and comparison tables.

The women were then tested before their surgery consultations, and those who were sent to the standard web sites got 66 percent of the questions correct, compared with women who used the decision-making tool, who answered 80 percent correctly. Importantly, more women who used the tool knew that it was fine to wait a few weeks before making surgery decisions.

“Women who viewed the decision aid seemed to have a decreased urgency to quickly make a treatment decision,” says Neuman, who is a breast-cancer surgeon.

“This may ultimately increase the quality of their consultations with their surgeons and enhance their ability to make a good decision.”

Neuman presented her findings at the 2017 Society of Surgical Oncology meeting in Seattle. They are being reported in today’s edition of the [ASCO Post](#), published by the American Society of Clinical Oncology.

Gillian Schroeder, UW Health Breast Center program director, says Neuman’s research has led the center to use these decision aids to help prepare patients with early-stage breast cancer before they see their surgeons at the 1 S. Park Street and University Hospital locations.