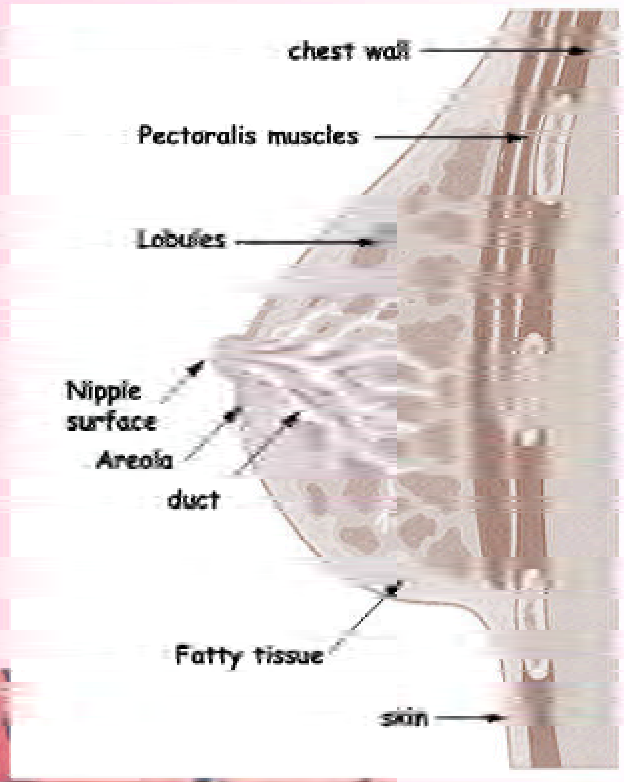
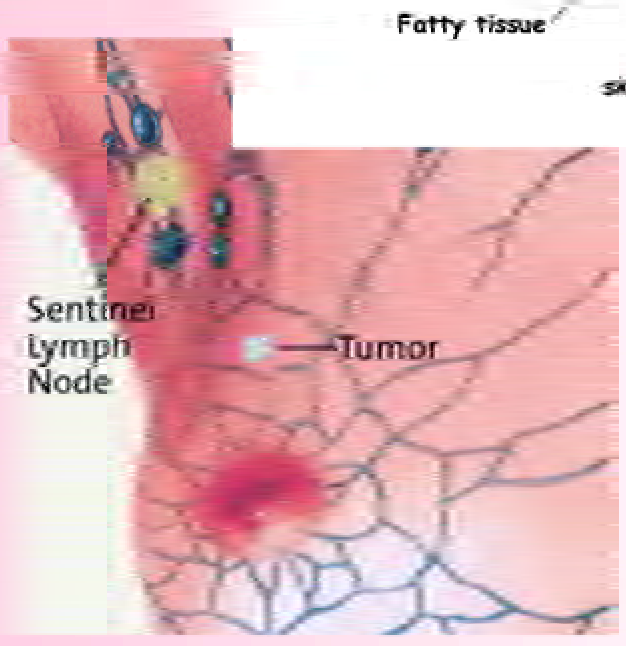
HOW BREAST CANCER SPREADS

The breast consists of blood and lymph vessels, fat cells, and lobes, lobules, and bulbs that are connected by ducts. Cancer can occur at any site within the breast. Breast cancer can spread to other parts of the body through the lymph system. Since doctors know how the cancer spreads, they try to identify the "sentinel node," the lymph node where the breast cancer would spread to first. If cancer cells are found in the sentinel node, then doctors would know that the cancer could have spread to other nodes or parts of the body. This helps doctors know how extensive surgery should be and what additional treatments might be necessary.

Survival rates have greatly increased with improved screening and new treatments.

Many factors influence the outcome of breast cancer:

- The stage and grade of cancer when disgnosed
- The age and overall health status of the individual
- The success of surgical, chemotherapy, and radiation treatments.

New medications are available that can significantly reduce the risk of cancer recurring.