

Plain English Summary

192 women were assessed to see if they could take part, and 126 were included in the study. They were split into two groups by chance: one group received a self-help booklet about body image, and the other received the same booklet plus the ABC programme - seven weekly online group sessions.

Most women stayed in the study throughout, with more than 8 in 10 completing surveys at each check-in point over the 32 weeks. Among those who joined ABC, more than 3 in 4 attended at least 6 of the 7 sessions, and they rated the programme as helpful. Women who took part in interviews said ABC helped them feel more accepting of their bodies, gave them a sense of shared support with other women who understood what they'd been through, and taught them useful ways of coping.

Women who took part in ABC showed greater improvements than those who received the booklet alone in how they felt about their bodies and their quality of life, and this difference was seen at every check-in point. Their sense of general wellbeing and day-to-day functioning also improved more. Feelings of psychological distress didn't differ between the two groups early on, but by the end of the study, women who did ABC reported less distress — and this appeared to be explained, at least in part, by the improvements they'd made in how they felt about their bodies. Not every measure showed a difference between groups: how women felt about intimacy and their overall health-related quality of life were similar in both groups.

Overall, these early findings suggest ABC may genuinely help women feel better about their bodies and their wellbeing after breast cancer, and support moving ahead with a larger study to test this properly.