

Tumour extension (Core)

Tumour extension to involve overlying skin or underlying skeletal muscle is a variable which influences TNM staging and should be recorded when present. It is recognised that in the context of primary operable breast cancer these phenomena are rare. The majority of cancer resection cases will be confined to the breast with no skin, nipple or underlying skeletal muscle involvement and in this context disease extent classification is deemed non-core.

The finding of invasive carcinoma that directly invades into the dermis or epidermis without skin ulceration does not change the pT stage.

Satellite skin nodules must be separate from the primary tumour and macroscopically identified to assign a category as pT4b. Skin nodules identified only on microscopic examination and in the absence of epidermal ulceration or skin oedema (clinical peau d'orange) do not qualify as pT4b. Such tumours should be categorised based on tumour size.

The finding of tumour extension into the nipple does not change the pT classification of invasive carcinomas.

Invasion into pectoralis muscle is not considered chest wall invasion, and cancers are not classified as pT4a unless there is invasion deeper than this muscle.