

What It's Like to Have Breast Cancer

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Goals and Objectives

- Describe procedures that the breast cancer patient experiences
- List common side effects of chemotherapy
- Explain emotional responses patients may have to diagnosis and treatment
- Demonstrate how emotional and physical responses affect patient behaviors
- Create a more compassionate understanding of patient needs
- Implement appropriate communication skills.



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Sequence of Events: 2017-2018

- Screening mammogram
- Additional views
- US
- US-guided core biopsy
- Stereotactic biopsy
- Diagnosis



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Sequence of Events: 2017-2018

- Treatment plan
- Second, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth opinions
- Medication
- Port placement
- Chemo (12 rounds of Taxol)
- MRIs



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Sequence of Events: 2017-2018

- More chemo (4 rounds of the Red Devil)
- Neutropenic fever (Chemo crash)
- Wireless localization
- Sentinel node procedure
- Lumpectomy
- Radiation treatment



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Source: <https://metrowestmri.com/services/breast-mri-and-fast-breast-mri/>

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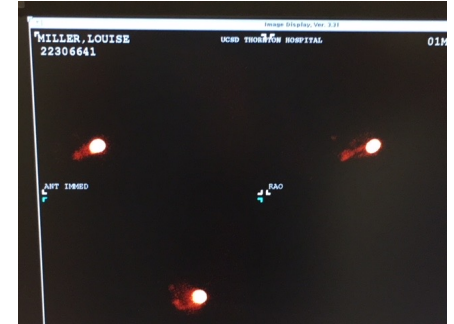
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Typical Feelings

- Anger
- Fear
- Helplessness
- "It's not fair"
- "Why me?"
- Guilt



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Manifestation of Feelings

- Crabby
- Weepy
- Argumentative
- Non-communicative
- Rude
- Timid



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Causes of Typical Feelings

- Fear of the effects of chemotherapy (baldness)
- Fear of losing our breast(s)
- Fear of dying
- Lack of knowledge
- Misinformation
- Appointments (so many, *longggg* waits)



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What People Usually Know

Physical side effects of chemotherapy:

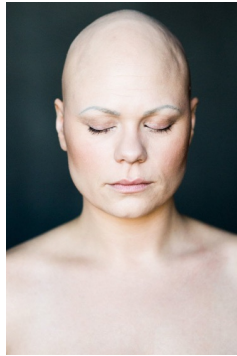
- Nausea
- Hair loss



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The Big Fear



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What Most People Do Not Know

- The “chemo” experience
- Physical side effects of chemotherapy
- Emotional side effects of having cancer



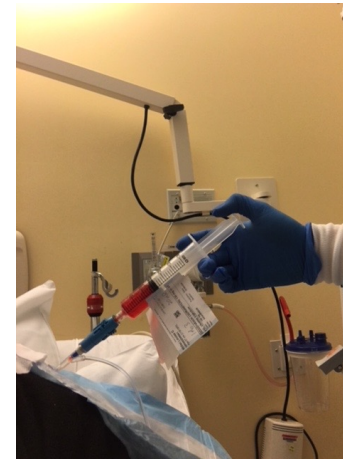
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What Most People Do Not Know

Physical side effects of chemotherapy:

- Anemia
- Appetite changes
- Bleeding problems
- Constipation
- Diarrhea
- Fatigue
- Infection



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Red Blood Cell Count

& Cancer

What can you do about red blood cell count after chemo & radiation?

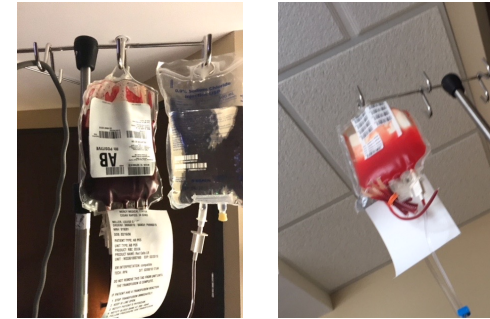
SteadyHealth.com



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Neutropenic Fever



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What Most People Do Not Know

Physical side effects of chemotherapy:

- Mouth/throat/nose sores and changes
- Nerve changes (neuropathy)
- Pain
- Sexual changes
- Swelling
- Urinary changes
- Memory changes



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If I had a dollar for everytime I got distracted, I wish I had some ice cream.



somee cards
user card



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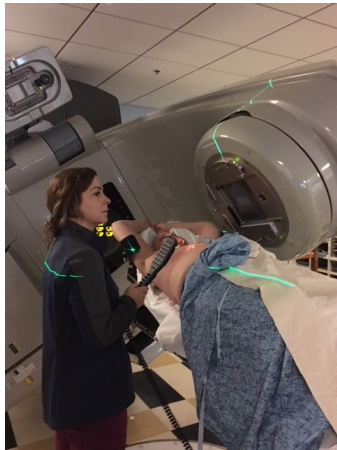
Radiation Therapy

- 3 weeks whole breast
- 1 week "boost"



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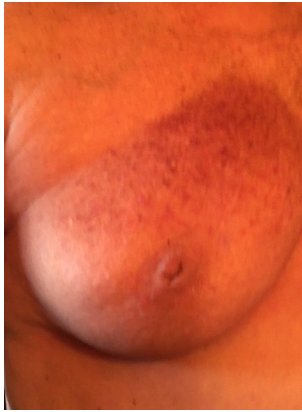
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What Most People Do Not Know

Emotional side effects of having cancer



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Common Emotions During/After Treatment

- Concerns about chronic health problems
- What do I do next?
- Frustration with physical changes or new limitations
- Sense of grief or loss (over others being diagnosed)
- Discomfort or shame when asking for help so long after treatment
- Anger



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Common Emotions During/After Treatment

- Relief that it is finally over
- Cautious optimism
- Fluctuations in emotions
- Concerns about chronic health problems



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The Number One Concern...
FEAR OF RECURRENCE

- It can interfere with every aspect of life.
- It can be triggered by reminders.
- It can be masked by the effects of treatment.



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Stage 0 – DCIS
Dx: August 2023
Finish Tx: January 2024



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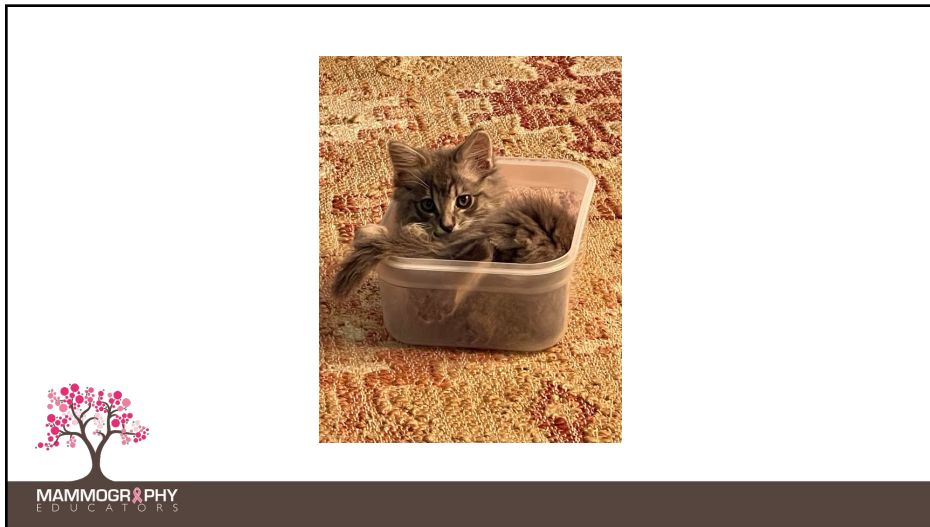
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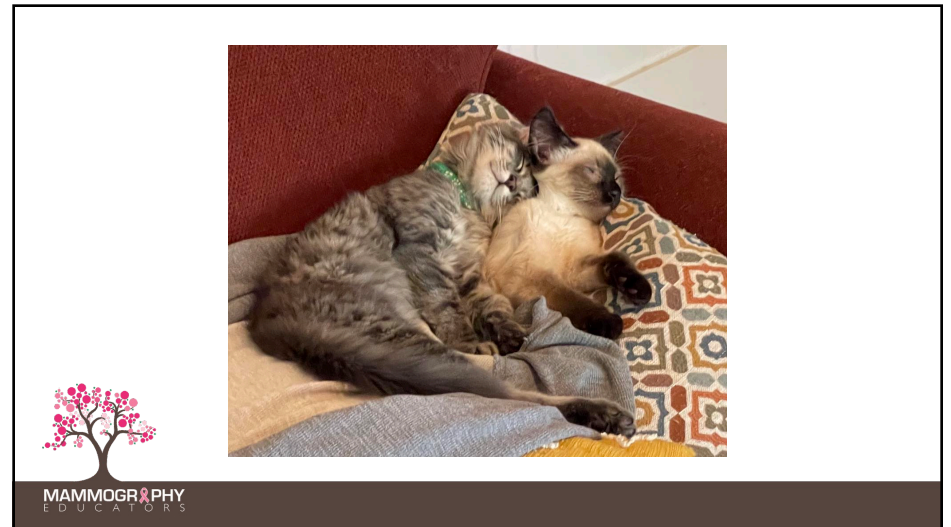
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July 2024

- Fever 102+
- Night sweats
- Severe headaches
- Lost 20+ lbs in 4 weeks
- Extremely weak
- Balance issues
- Blood tests - toxoplasmosis
- Liver US
- Low dose antibiotics



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August/September 2024

- Saw oncologist
- CT
- MRI (brain and liver)
- Bone scan



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Menu UC San Diego Health

MRI LIVER WO/W CONTRAST

CLINICAL HISTORY:
Characterize lesion (not FNH). Breast cancer.

TECHNIQUE:
SCANNER: 1.5 Tesla superconducting magnet
COVERAGE: Abdomen
IV CONTRAST: 10 mL of (gadobutrol (GADAVIST) injection SOLN 10 mL)
SEQUENCES: Multiplanar, multisequence MR images were acquired prior to administration.

COMPARISON:
CT abdomen/pelvis 9/16/2024.

FINDINGS:
LUNG BASES: Unremarkable
LIVER: Multiple hepatic metastatic lesions, for reference:
*2.1 x 1.2 cm segment 8 metastasis (series 904, image 78)
*1.4 cm segment 8 metastasis (series 904, image 70)
*1.6 cm segment 2/3 metastasis (series 904, image 62).



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Menu UC San Diego Health

← Test Results List

CT ABDOMEN AND PELVIS WITH CONTRAST

Results

Impression

IMPRESSION:
At least 5 hypoattenuating lesions are seen in the right-greater-than-left hepatic lobes which are highly concerning for hepatic metastases. These are new since 2017 and might correlate with hepatic foci seen recent abdominal ultrasound from 8/8/2024. Again MR liver with Eovist could better enumerate and assess size and spread of the lesions.

At least 2 splenic lesions which are new since prior study from 2017 are also concerning for metastases. can also be further evaluated with MRI if performed for hepatic metastases.

No other evidence of metastatic disease in the abdomen/pelvis.

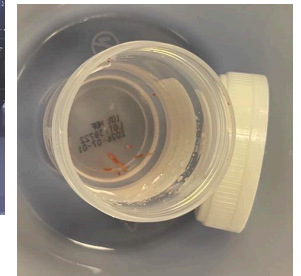
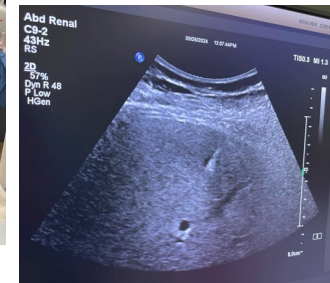


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Liver Biopsy



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Liver Biopsy

NEGATIVE!!



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Diagnoses from Blood Tests

- Coccidioidomycosis (Valley Fever)
- Coxiella Burnetii (Query Fever)



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Diagnoses from Blood Tests

- Coccidioidomycosis (Valley Fever)
- Coxiella Burnetii (Query Fever)
- **Bartonella Henselae**



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January 2025 Erythema Nodosum




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Cat Scratch Disease
(*Bartonella Henselae*)



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Source: Vet and Tech

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Remember: Recovery Takes Time

“When treatment ends, the “warrior” and his/her family are often not prepared for the fact that recovery takes time. In general, your recovery will take much longer than your treatment did. People often say that they did not realize how much time they needed to recover.”




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Source: Facing Forward: Life After Cancer Treatment

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Learning and Teaching Points

- The realization that the breast cancer survivor/patient may have different emotional and physical needs
- The effectiveness of good communication skills
- The importance of education



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Importance of Communication

Tips for Techs:

- Speak their language
- Do not offer opinions or share your personal cancer experience
- Address the patient
- Utilize non-verbal communication, i.e., hugs



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“Say What?”: Things You Should Never Say to a Cancer Patient

- “What are your odds?”
- “You brought this on yourself.”
- “I know someone with your type of cancer, they _____.”
- “Good luck on your journey.”
- “Forget what your doctor says, you should try x, y, z.”
- Nothing



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What Can You Do or Say as a Professional?

- Speak from the heart: “I’m so sorry”
- Acknowledge the patient’s feelings
- Respect their decisions
- Use this new knowledge to create compassion



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Importance of Education

- Learn all you can
- Ask questions
- Read, read, read
- Understand the patient experience
- Use the information to be compassionate towards those finding their way



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KNOWLEDGE IS POWER!!



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~~REACTIVE~~
PROACTIVE



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What You Can Do as a Friend

- Speak from the heart
- Help with specific tasks before they ask
- Remember, even cancer patients get “cancered” out
- Be there
- Support their decisions
- Give compassion



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“Cancer brings changes that are not always for the worse and they bring about healthy personal growth. The cancer experience and your emotional responses can become important resources as you face your future.”



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Source: LIVESTRONG

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COMPASSION



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HOPE



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This is personal!

Each and every patient belongs to someone.

Take the time to see them as such.



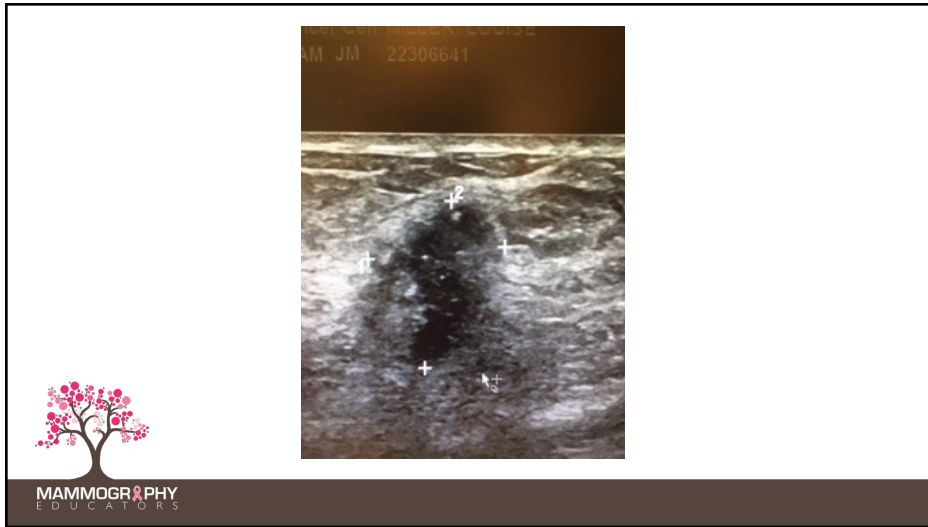
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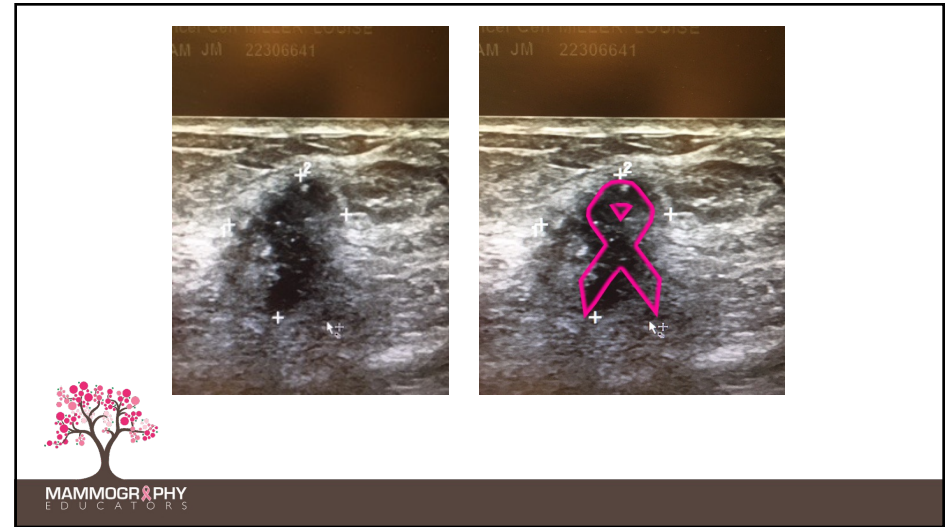


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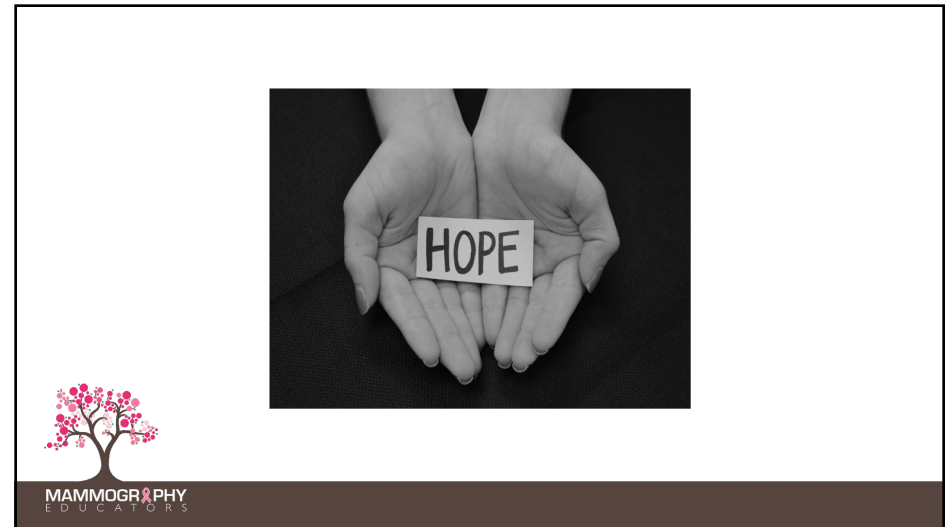
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