

Too Young for Breast Cancer?

By Danielle Garland for Advocate Health Care Health Enews.



In June 2015, I began to notice a difference in my breasts. While doing a self-exam, I felt a lump in my left breast that didn't appear in my right one. I'm a healthy, young adult, so I didn't worry myself about it. Instead, I brushed it off and went about my daily routine.

That September, I took a vacation to Cancun. My left breast had suddenly become excruciatingly painful, and I was having trouble sleeping at night. I took Advil for relief, but I knew something wasn't right.

In early October, I went in for a breast exam at Advocate South Suburban Hospital and left with a referral for an ultrasound. The ultrasound came back abnormal and I had a biopsy. It was that day that I received the worst news of my life: I had been diagnosed with stage 3 breast cancer at the age of 22.

My heart dropped and I couldn't believe what I was hearing. How could I possibly have breast cancer so young? Routine mammograms aren't recommended until I reach 40. There was no history of breast cancer in my family, so how could this be?

I eventually had genetic testing done, and the results showed that I have a gene mutation, which leads to an increased risk of developing cancer.

Now, I encourage young women to perform breast self-exams and talk to their doctor if anything doesn't feel right or if the appearance of their breasts changes in any way. Many young women like myself don't realize the many symptoms of breast cancer. Women may also consider genetic testing if they are worried. It can help you make decisions about your health before problems come up.

Cancer has no age limit, and I share my story to spread awareness. By educating women, I hope to save lives by helping them to tackle this disease during the early stages or before it even develops.

Wishing you joy and good health,
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