



Cancer Q & A

with Kathy Kanavos

YOUR CONCERNS ABOUT CANCER

Dear Kathy,

I have a very real fear of having breast cancer recurrence. It seems to always be on my mind. How did you handle this pervasive fear and what follow-up tests did you have after your treatments were completed to watch for recurrence?

Debbie in Boston, MA

Dear Debbie,

First of all, let me put your mind at ease by saying a very small number of women experience recurrence. Those patients who do, have a better chance of surviving than ever before in the history of modern medicine. I dealt with this fear through meditation, faith, and listening to my body and dreams.

My follow-up routine was a mammogram every six months followed by an MRI six months later. Since my first cancer was not found on mammograms, I chose an MRI as a better way of watching for suspicious signs.

I also had blood work done and a physical examination every six months. Over time these precautions were reduced to once a year after three years.

The most important factor in finding and surviving cancer recurrence is finding it at the earliest possible stage. Listen to your fears but don't be ruled by them.

Please email your questions to
kathykanavos@yahoo.com

Dear Kathy,

After your radiation therapy, did you have any side effects after sunbathing? Is it okay for me to go out in the sun?

Linda

Dear Linda,

I was told by my doctors that I could have shooting pains and a reaction to direct sunlight after radiation therapy for up to five years. Occasionally I would get a pain in my nipple. This warning helped me not to become alarmed.

If I sat out in the direct sunlight for more than ten minutes, I would get a small amount of "sun poisoning." Sun poisoning is a rash on the skin that's a very itchy form of hives.

I limited my sun exposure to less than ten minutes after radiation and wore good sunscreen.

Dear Kathy,

My first cancer was not found using mammograms yet hospital policy dictates that this is the "Gold Standard" of treatment used as my follow-up treatment. I am very worried. What should I do?

Janet

Dear Janet,

My first and second cancer was missed by mammograms also, so I understand your dilemma. Young women have dense breasts. This can make mammograms less reliable. My second breast cancer was found by MRI.

If I were being told to use a "Gold Standard" that did not work the first time, I'd ask for the "Platinum Standard" that included an MRI. During treatment and recovery, I refused to be dismissed or ignored. Be strong.

Kathleen O'Keefe-Kanavos is a cancer survivor and an agented author of SURVIVING CANCERLAND: The Psychic Aspects of Healing. She is currently working on her second book, SURVIVING RECURRENCE in CANCERLAND: The Dream World and Healing. Visit her [web site](#) and her [blog](#) .

In addition to answering readers' cancer questions for [CapeWomenOnline.com](#), Kathleen is a phone counselor for the R.A. BLOCH Cancer Foundation and a breast cancer mentor for WE CAN. Her articles about her experiences appear on many blogs and discussion groups. She also volunteers for many cancer organizations and online cancer support groups. Follow her on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#)

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