



## Cancer Q & A

with Kathy Kanavos

### Ask Me Anything!

#### KATHY O'KEEFE KANAVOS ADDRESSES YOUR CONCERNS ABOUT CANCER

Dear Kathy,

Thank you for your care and replies. They're appreciated!

I'm trying to be happy. But, I'm overwhelmed with head-to-toe pain. The 30th of this month is our 31st Wedding Anniversary. That is a Happy Day.

Someday I hope we can have a honeymoon or weekend away. We've never done that yet - spent the night away from home - except for overnight stays in the hospital. We got our wedding rings when I was 18. Due to my side effects, I can no longer wear mine. My wedding ring finger has swollen. Can you wear your wedding ring yet? I hate how I can't. They have a world of sentimental meaning to us! Quality of life is needed for all!

Angel

Dear Angel,

Congratulations on 31 years of marriage. That is indeed a reason to celebrate and I'm pleased that you will.

I'm sorry to hear that you are in so much pain. The pain you describe is quite common during and after cancer treatment. It is called neuropathy and is from surgery and chemotherapy. Your nerve endings are repairing themselves, and in the process they go into overdrive.

Synapsis is the process of nerve energy jumping from one neuron to another. When nerves are repairing themselves, they can become overly sensitive to the nervous impulse as it passes from one neuron to another resulting in tingling, numbness and burning. I had that too. In time, mine went away.

Yes, my ring finger swelled after I had my surgeries and lymph nodes removed. I wore my wedding band on a chain around my neck until the swelling diminished. I know some treatment friends who wore their rings on their pinky-fingers.

Whenever my arm or hand would swell, I would sleep at night with it propped on the pillow above my head. This taught my lymphatic system to find a new drainage route for the fluid build-up in my arm. Yes, in time, my swelling did go down. And, I now wear my wedding ring on my wedding ring finger, again. I pray that soon you will, too.

Ask me anything.

Kathy

If you are struggling with your own diagnosis, or know someone who is, please email Kathy with your questions and concerns at: [katkan@comcast.net](mailto:katkan@comcast.net)

Hi, Kathy,

What is a Reiki Master? And how long ago did you have stage 4 breast cancer?

Melinda in S. Carolina

Dear Melinda,

"Reiki" is a Japanese technique for stress reduction and relaxation that also promotes healing through the laying on of hands. I am a Reiki Master. It means I completed the previous levels of Reiki Healing and now I can send "Distance Healing" and teach others the art of Reiki Healing. I learned from a Reiki Master.

I experienced Reiki for the first time when I had my first breast cancer in 1999. I liked it so much that I took a class. One class led to another until I became a master. Even though I have been cancer-free for 7 years, I still Reiki myself every night. I consider it part of my "follow-up" treatment.

Check with your local Health Food Stores or Holistic Centers for Reiki classes if you are interested in learning more. Most of the information on the internet is very good at explaining Reiki. Here is a link that you may find helpful:

<http://www.reiki.org/faq/whatisreiki.html>

Look it over and then, Ask me anything!

Kathy

Dear Kathy,

What is "alternative medicine therapy"? Is it the same as complimentary medicine? Have you ever used it and do you think it works?

Mary in Nevada

Dear Mary,

"Alternative" medicine or treatment is used instead of conventional medicine. Rather than using chemotherapy or radiation therapy to treat cancer, someone may choose to use an alternative or holistic therapy. I have a friend with bone cancer who is using Gerson Therapy rather than conventional therapy and it is working!

Complimentary therapy (also known as Integrative Therapy) is alternative therapy that is also used with conventional therapy and medicine. I used the complimentary approach by integrating Reiki therapy, dream therapy, vitamins, and Kambucha and herbal teas during my conventional treatment.

There are many alternative and complimentary therapies available. Here is a link to the Office of Complementary & Alternative Medicine (OCCAM) if you wish to read more about what alternative and complementary medicines offer:

<http://www.cancer.gov/cam/>

Ask me anything.

Kathy

Dear Kathy,

Have you heard of a tea called "Essiac Tea" and its results with cancer?

Mary in New Jersey

Dear Mary,

I have heard of Essiac and found it enjoyable as an herbal tea with a musky-earthy flavor. Essiac is a dietary supplement purported by herbalists to have beneficial effects for the immune system. It can be purchased in many forms: tea, powder, extract, and capsules.

The four main botanicals in Essiac Tea are: sheep sorrel, which acts on the endocrinal system; burdock root, which eliminates free radicals and purifies blood; slippery elm, which is believed to dissolve mucous deposits in tissues, glands and nerve channels; and Indian rhubarb, which reportedly cleans the liver of toxins.

Essiac is also known as Flora Essence, Tea of Life, Herbal Essence, and Vitalitea. Flora Essence has the added ingredients of watercress, blessed thistle, red clover, and kelp. I found Flora Essence to have more of a bitter taste than traditional Essiac.

Essiac has an interesting history. In 1922, a public health nurse named Rene Caisse from Ontario, Canada learned about Essiac from a patient. The patient claimed to have recovered from breast cancer by taking an Indian herbal tea developed by an Ojibwa medicine man. She obtained the recipe and reportedly treated her aunt's stomach cancer with the tea.

In 1924, Caisse opened a clinic and began to offer cancer patients the herbal mixture, which she named Essiac (her last name spelled backward). She treated thousands of patients using her secret formula as a tea and as an injection. Canadian medical authorities investigated the clinic in 1938 and concluded that there was little evidence for the effectiveness of Essiac. Caisse gave her 4-herb formula to a manufacturer in Toronto in 1977, a year before her death, with the intent of having it tested and sold for a reasonable cost.

Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center conducted animal testing of Essiac in 1959 and the mid-1970s but no anti-tumor effects were verified. In 1983, Canadian federal health officials requested that Essiac be tested by the U.S. National Cancer Institute (NCI), which found no evidence of anti-cancer activity in animal studies. Canadian health officials reviewed 86 case studies and concluded that there was no evidence that Essiac slowed the progression of cancer. They noted that there were few serious side effects, however, and that people may have benefited psychologically from the

treatment.

Ask me anything.

Kathy

Kathleen O'Keefe-Kanavos is a two-time breast cancer survivor who penned **SURVIVING CANCERLAND: The Psychic Aspects of Healing**.

She is represented by Scovil, Galen & Ghosh Literary Agency & **Steve Allen Media**. She's a phone counselor for R.A. BLOCH Cancer Foundation, Q&A cancer columnist for *CapeWomenOnlineMagazine*, an inspirational speaker, mentor, cancer volunteer, and Cambridge Who's Who Executive Professional of the Year 2009-2010.

Kathy was recently interviewed on the Dr. Pat radio show, and told how her dreams found her cancer that the doctors missed. You can listen to a podcast [here](#).

She's scheduled to appear on the Dr. Bernie Siegel show January 3rd at 9:00 am PT (12:00 EST)

Visit her [website](#) and [Facebook page](#); follow her on [Twitter](#) ; and connect with her on [LinkedIn](#).