



Cancer Q & A

with Kathy Kanavos

KATHY O'KEEFE KANAVOS ADDRESSES YOUR CONCERNS ABOUT CANCER

Dear Kathy,

When I first received my diagnosis, I freaked out. Now I'm so depressed that I don't want to go out, see anyone or even talk to anyone on the phone. Is this normal and will I ever get over this depression? I will be starting treatment soon.

Linda in Tennessee

Dear Linda,

I am sorry you are undergoing such difficulty. What you are experiencing is the perfectly normal mood swing associated with any life crisis. Anytime someone receives shocking news, the body goes into "fight or flight" mode. You often feel frantic one moment and lethargic the next.

Once your psyche settles down, the pendulum of mood swings lessens. It never completely stops, but that is part of life and you are still very much a part of it. You will find middle ground in your emotions. It just takes time and patience with your inner selves.

Discuss your depression with your medical team. I was given the drug Atavan during my treatment to deal with anxiety attacks. However, I found that the side effects of extreme grogginess outweighed the positive effects of the drug.

I found relief in deep meditation. There are many wonderful free mediation tapes on some online sites like Facebook, and available for purchase in bookstores. This may be a great reason to venture out of the house or, if you are not ready to face the world, they can be ordered online.

Remember, you are not alone, the staff at CapeWomenOnline and I do care. Please stay in touch.

Dear Kathy,

How long have you been cancer free? I hope your prognosis is good and that you're currently doing well. I look forward to hearing from you.

Brenda in Bangor, Maine

Dear Brenda,

Thank you for asking. I have been free of my first cancer for twelve years and my second cancer for seven years. Like many women diagnosed with breast cancer, I am doing great! There are more survivors of cancer today than ever before in the history of medicine.

I believe this is a result of two things: medicine has improved and people are integrating it with holistic and spiritual therapies. By addressing the mind, body, spirit approach to healing we can heal more than just the body. And that is one of the things that makes my prognosis so good.

If you are struggling with your own diagnosis, or know someone who is, please email Kathy with your questions and concerns at:
kathykanavos@yahoo.com

Dear Kathy,

I was just diagnosed with Ductal Carcinoma in Situ. I meet with a team of specialists on Thursday so I won't have any definite answers until then...but, my OBGYN has said I should expect a lumpectomy and radiation.

I've heard about an internal radiation using seeds put through tubes into the cancerous area. It's only five days of treatment, versus five to seven weeks, and a lot less exposure to radiation than the external type. Do you know anything about it?

Cindy in Florida

Dear Cindy,

You sound like you have a wonderful attitude and are busy collecting information to make an acceptable game plan with your medical team. Yes, I have heard of "radiation seeds" and they have been used in prostate cancer for quite some time. It is only recently that they've been available for breast cancer treatment.

Using radiation seeds is known as Internal Radiation or "brachytherapy." It is also referred to as partial-breast radiation. It involves placing small radioactive seeds into catheters inside your breast, where the tumor used to be. The radioactive seeds emit the proper treatment dose of energy to the tumor cavity as well as the surrounding tissue.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved a new technology for brachytherapy called balloon catheter radiation in 2002. For breast radiation, some methods use a balloon, and others use a device that expands like a balloon, once it is placed inside your breast.

These methods of partial-breast radiation are gaining acceptance among oncologists, and may be an option for you. Treatment is given for 5 to 7 days, after which the catheter is removed. Because this method of radiation takes less time than external beam radiation, it is also called accelerated partial breast irradiation.

The goal of treatment with a balloon catheter device such as MammoSite or ClearPath is to radiate breast tissue in and around the tumor cavity in order to destroy any remaining cancer cells, while limiting irradiation to healthy tissues in your lungs, heart, skin, and fat. Balloon catheters are available as single-source (one catheter containing the radiation dose) and multiple-source models (several catheters containing the radiation doses.)

I know this is quite a bit of information but I hope it helps answer your questions. Good luck and stay in touch. CapeWomenOnline and I care.

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](#)