

Breast Cancer Survivorship—A Personal Story

[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

[Reed Walton] Knowing your family history can be crucial to understanding your risk for breast cancer. I'm Reed Walton and I'm here with Pam Bryant, a breast cancer survivor, one of many in her family.

[Pam Bryant] That's right, Reed. I knew that with my family's history, there was a possibility that I would get breast cancer. My mother, my aunt, and my cousin are all breast cancer survivors. Most of them got breast cancer when they were young. My cousin was diagnosed when she was only 33.

[Reed Walton] So you knew how important it was to live a healthy lifestyle and get screened. For most women, it's recommended to start getting screening mammograms every two years at age 50, but because of *your* family history, did you start getting them earlier?

[Pam Bryant] Yes, of course. Because of my family history, I'm at high risk. I knew it was important to get my mammograms. My doctor advised me to start mammograms earlier than women who are at average risk. And, in fact, I was diagnosed when I was 43.

[Reed Walton] Tell us a little bit about how you found out you had breast cancer.

[Pam Bryant] I was always encouraged to know my own body, so when I found a lump before my yearly mammogram appointment, I was concerned. After having the mammogram, the doctors decided to do a biopsy, and they found that the lump was cancer. On top of that, it was a very aggressive form of breast cancer.

[Reed Walton] So then they started treatment for the cancer?

[Pam Bryant] Yes. I had eight rounds of chemotherapy. Halfway through the chemo, the lump shrank so much it was nearly gone. The doctors and I decided on a lumpectomy and radiation treatment.

[Reed Walton] That must have been hard. But the cancer hasn't returned?

[Pam Bryant] I'm fortunate so far. I do as much as I can by eating well, exercising, and keeping my stress levels down.

[Reed Walton] Are you the same person you were before breast cancer?

[Pam Bryant] Not exactly. Friends and family say, "Oh, she's back to the old Pam." But that's not true. I have what I call a "new normal." That means a different attitude towards life. It also means annual mammograms and MRIs to make sure the cancer hasn't returned.

[Reed Walton] What would you do if it does?

[Pam Bryant] Well, I asked myself if I could go through it again, and I decided that, yes, I could. I have too much to live for, and too much living to do. I have strength buried inside me, and it's not buried too far.

[Reed Walton] Now, let me just ask you, what advice do you have for women facing breast cancer?

[Pam Bryant] I won't say "don't be upset," because it is a scary diagnosis. You'll have ups and downs. Some days you're going to feel well and some days you won't. Just take it one day at a time and let people help you. The response I got was amazing. People from work and family members would sit with me during chemo sessions. They brought me meals and helped around the house. The outpouring of support was incredible. Don't be afraid to rely on your support network.

[Reed Walton] Thank you so much for talking with us, Pam. I hope this conversation motivates women to learn more about their family history, which can be a big factor in determining whether they have a higher risk of getting breast cancer. CDC's *Bring Your Brave* campaign provides information about breast cancer to women younger than 45 by sharing real stories about young women whose lives have been affected by breast cancer. Visit us at cdc.gov/cancer.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.