

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month

Is 3D mammography right for you?

Mammograms take images of breast tissue to determine the presence of abnormalities, including lumps. Women may undergo traditional, 2D mammograms, but increasingly many healthcare facilities are now employing 3D technology because it can provide clearer pictures.

A 3D mammogram, also called digital tomosynthesis, takes several different X-rays of the breasts and combines those images to establish a three-dimensional picture. The Mayo Clinic says that a 3D mammogram is typically used to search for breast cancer in people who may have no outward signs or symptoms. It also may be used to help diagnose the cause of a breast mass or nipple discharge. Doctors may suggest 3D imaging to get a better look at any growths or help identify the source of any symptoms a person may be concerned about.

Two-dimensional mammograms are still the industry standard. The 3D versions are obtained in a similar fashion by pressing the breasts between two imaging plates. Rather than just taking images from the sides and top to bottom, the 3D version will take multiple angles to make a digital recreation of the breast. Medical News Today says this enables doctors to look at small, individual sections of the breast tissue that may be as thin as just a single millimeter.

A study published in the journal JAMA Oncology says cancer detection rates are higher in people who do 3D imaging over time. Three-dimensional mammograms can be useful for women with dense breast tissue or those at higher risk for breast cancer. Although experts at MD Anderson Cancer Center advise any woman who needs a mammogram to get the 3D version. However, 3D mammography may not be covered by all insurance plans.

It's important to note that a 3D mammogram releases the same amount of radiation as a traditional mammogram. It is of no greater risk to the patient, and it is approved by the Food and Drug Administration. Also of note, because 3D mammograms produce more images, it may take a radiologist a little longer to read one than it would a 2D mammogram.

Three-dimensional mammograms are an option for women screening for breast cancer.

Survivor

Continued from Page 14

me. My heart dropped to my knees, and I shook in disbelief. The first few days and weeks were a sea of tears and sadness. I felt so scared, so alone, so confused. I didn't know what had happened to me, how the rug got pulled out from under my family so abruptly. I was afraid I was going to die. Slowly, I began regaining my footing. I began finding my new normal. It has not been that long for me – nearly four months. But I am still here. And so, too, will you be.

It's a strange feeling, navigating this illness. You may not want to talk about it, and you may want to talk about it a lot. And both are okay. Honor your moment. Whatever you are feeling or experiencing, whether it is anger, or frustration, or sadness, or finding happiness in the midst of grief; whatever that is is okay. Give yourself the gift of letting go: let go of that which holds you back, brings you down, binds you. Some days are hard, and they will stretch you so thin, you think you will snap. You do not have to be strong all of the time; creating space for yourself to rest and find respite is a strong and courageous act in itself.

You will hear things about how tough you are and how much of a fighter you are. And you won't necessarily see yourself in those words, because you didn't choose to have to be tough. But you will open your eyes one day and realize the vastness of your strength and the immense courage you have learned to summon to survive. Cancer becomes the lens through which you view and live your life, and through that lens, you will see in yourself the incredible, unbelievable tenacity of the human spirit – your spirit.

Every night, as I try to fall asleep, I have found a mantra that I repeat to myself: "You are beautiful. You are powerful. You are stronger than you can imagine. And you can do this."

And so can you.


With all of my love,
Emily

Breast Cancer Awareness




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