



Cancer Q & A

with Kathy Kanavos

KATHY O'KEEFE KANAVOS ADDRESSES YOUR CONCERNS ABOUT CANCER

Dear Kathy,

I wanted to thank you for the information you sent me concerning Radiation Seeds vs. Conventional Radiation treatment for breast cancer. It answered many of my questions. I printed it out and will take it to my doctor's appointment next week.

Linda

Dear Linda,

I'm so glad the information on radiation seeds for treating breast cancer was helpful. Other interested readers can find this information at <http://www.breastcancer.org/treatment/radiation/types/internal.jsp>

Taking printed information into meetings can help physicians understand your questions more easily and help you formulate your questions in a language you both can understand. Our goal at CapeWomenOnline Magazine is to help women.

Stay in touch, because we care.

Kathy

Dear Kathy,

I survived recurrent breast cancer. My question is not about the cancer. It has not come back again. It is about my husband. I feel that he is tired of taking care of me. I know going through treatment with me twice was difficult. I don't want to be a burden on him. He never says anything about it but I just feel he is tired of taking care of me. What should I do?

Doris in Colorado

Dear Doris,

I really do know how you feel. I went through breast cancer treatment twice, too. I often wondered how my husband coped with the pressure. Then one day I came right out and asked him. We discussed our feelings, came to new realizations, and viewed treatment from different points of view. We reconnected and rekindled our love.

Illness affects the whole family. As a family unit, we must care for one another in good and bad times, in sickness and in health. What does not destroy us makes us stronger.

You are very special person because you have survived recurrence. And, you must love your husband very much if you are talking about him rather than your illness. Perhaps your husband does not know how to respond physically or emotionally to this new, stronger you.

Maybe he is taking cues from your body language that speaks of your insecurity about his feeling for you. He may be reading them as diminished feelings by you for him. He may be afraid of being rejected if he makes advances toward you. You both may be sending out mixed messages.

Small gestures like a hug, holding his hand, saying how much you love and appreciate him can be reassuring to both of you. You may both want to reconnect.

You have taken one bull, cancer, by the horns. Now take this one, relationship, by the horns and deal with it, too. Set up a romantic dinner and discuss what you are feeling, where your relationship is now and where you would like to see it progress in the future. Make plans for the future, even if it is only for the weekend.

Prolonged illness and stresses related to it changes people and their relationships. It may be time to rediscover yours. You may uncover loving things about each other that you never knew. Group, couple and/or individual therapy are other great ways to reconnect with yourself and others after a crisis. Let us know how you are doing.

We care.

Kathy

Dear Kathy,

I completed chemotherapy and radiation therapy for breast cancer. Now I'm on Aromasin. After I exercise or do anything physically exerting, I feel short of breath and my skin feels hot and prickly. Sometimes I will get pink patches on it. Have you heard of this? Do you think it is due to my chemo or the Aromasin?

Linda in Kansas

Dear Linda,

You may be having a residual side effect or reaction to residual chemo, radiation or your post treatment aromatase inhibitor. Your symptoms sound like hot flashes. I suffered from your symptoms for about two months after treatment. Then they went away. I am now on Arimidex and have no negative symptoms.

Aromasin, like Arimidex, which I take daily, is one of many aromatase inhibitors used to treat advanced breast cancer in post-menopausal women with estrogen positive receptors. Most aromatase inhibitors have side effects that occur in about 10-29% of patients receiving them. Side effects are listed as:

- o **Fatigue**
- o **Mild nausea**
- o **Hot flashes**
- o **Bone pain**
- o **Insomnia**
- o **Anxiety**

Talk to your doctor about what you are experiencing. If Aromasin is not right for you, there are many other aromatase drugs available to replace it and new ones are constantly being introduced to the market.

Hot flashes and breathlessness interfere with exercise. Exercise should be an important part of post-cancer therapy because it reduces or slows down osteoporosis, bone thinning, that can set the stage for fractures. Weight-bearing exercises such as strength training, walking, or running help fend off bone loss, along with a healthy diet, calcium and vitamin D supplements.

Talk with your oncologist about what you are experiencing and what strategies, changes or medications would be best for you. Congratulations on completing your cancer treatment. You have already done the hard part and this symptom can be fixed.

We care.

Kathy

Dear Kathy,

I finished chemotherapy and radiation therapy for breast cancer and now have numbness in my feet and hands. Is this normal and will it ever go away?

Norma in New Jersey

Dear Norma,

I experienced what you are experiencing on top of my toes. Mine went through different stages and was more of a feeling of burning rather than a prolonged numbness, but it's called the same thing - peripheral neuropathy.

Peripheral neuropathy is tingling, numbness, or discomfort in the hands and/or feet. It can occur with certain chemotherapy drugs, such as taxans, Taxol, and docetaxel known as Taxotere. I experienced neuropathy with the chemotherapies Adriamicin/Cytosin and again five years later with CMF (Cyclophosphamide, Methotrexate, 5-Flourouracil).

Although it may go away when chemotherapy is stopped, it can also be permanent. Although mine lasted more than a year, my condition was temporary. My numbness changed to burning, then to tingling and eventually disappeared. Report your symptoms to your oncologist and let us know how you are doing.

We care.

Kathy

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](#)

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