Putting my life back together
How volunteering after treatment helped

10 YEARS OF VITA!
We catch up with some old friends

MANAGING MENOPAUSAL SYMPTOMS

SUMMER LOOKS
SWIMWEAR TO HEADSCARVES

‘I felt cheated by my own body’

Exercise: how to get started

Free
Welcome to Vita

‘Happy birthday to us. Happy birthday to us. Happy birth…’ OK, you get the idea. It’s been 10 years since the first issue of Vita was published in summer 2006. Since then we’ve featured over 100 real-life stories – from women (and a few men) of all ages and backgrounds, keen to share their experience of breast cancer.

Birthdays are always better when celebrated with good friends. So we caught up with a handful of people who’ve appeared in the magazine over the years, and asked them: How has life been since you appeared in Vita? You can find out on page 18.

As usual, we’ve got four more real-life stories in this issue, including our wonderful cover star Hedwig. She’s been volunteering at Breast Cancer Care since her treatment finished, and on page 8 she reveals how helping out gave her a sense of normality at a difficult time. Elsewhere, we tackle an issue that affects many women being treated for breast cancer. If you’re struggling with menopausal symptoms, turn to page 14 for our top tips.

We look forward to bringing you many more interesting stories and articles over the next decade.

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In this issue, we look at some of the buzz our recent articles and blogposts caused on Facebook and Twitter.

Kim Smith revealed how her cancer affected her body image in an article entitled ‘My scar reminds me I’m still here’.

Over on the Vita blog, Alice-May Purkiss wrote a popular post called: ‘Radiotherapy: I knew what to expect but the reality was quite different’.

Sam: Can really relate to everything you say. Of course I would never have chosen to have cancer or the surgery but it has made me look at life a lot more positively and I’m thankful for that.

Katy: I always tell people it’s the best ‘worst’ thing that has ever happened to me. A complete kick up the bum to change my life for the better.

Johanna: Hate my scar but it has made me view life differently and appreciate everyone and everything that matters.

Bee-Kaye: I totally relate to everything! I’m only months after my op and everything is still very surreal and raw. I try not to hide from my scars difficult as it is... it shows my life’s journey so far.

Susan: I was diagnosed 9 years ago today. There is something strange about my breast cancer, it has made me a stronger person.

Elaine: I was terrified, on my own with the machine – only managed to look at it on my last session.

Sharon: Totally agree. Halfway through radio, and even though it’s easier than chemo, you hit the nail on the head. Thank you for sharing.

Esther: I had a 2 hour round trip to get to the hospital – so 15 days of travelling back and forth really took it out of me. In fact, I was probably more tired from the travelling than I was from the radiotherapy!

Lisa: I thought radio would be a walk in the park. How wrong was I!

Top tweet

@RecoHeart
@Vita_mag Just received your ‘Spring’ edition and it’s fab #breastcancer #reconstruction #surgery #scars #hairstyles #Chemotherapy articles!
News

20 years of The Show

Breast Cancer Care’s fabulous London fashion show is 20 years young. The 2016 Show London is taking place in a brand-new venue on 2 November. Our wonderful Vita cover star, Hedwig, is a model at this year’s event – turn to page 8 to read her story.

If you’d like to come along, details of how to book are on the back page of Vita.

News and views

Read all about it: our updated information packs

Breast cancer specialists and women who’ve had breast cancer have helped Breast Cancer Care update the Primary breast cancer and Moving Forward information packs.

The Primary breast cancer pack is for anyone diagnosed with primary breast cancer, and includes information about its diagnosis and treatment.

Moving Forward is for anyone who has finished, or is coming to the end of, their hospital treatment. It’s designed to help you move forward with more confidence after treatment. It’s packed with information and tips, from coping with ongoing effects of treatment or worries about breast cancer coming back, to health and wellbeing and practical issues.

Like all Breast Cancer Care’s information, the packs were checked and reviewed by healthcare professionals who treat people with breast cancer, as well as women who’ve been affected themselves.

To find out more or to order or download a copy, visit breastcancercare.org.uk or call 0808 800 6000.
Can taking letrozole for 10 years reduce recurrence risk?

Breast cancer hit the headlines in June, when a study reported that taking a type of hormone therapy for 10 years (compared to the usual five) could reduce the risk of breast cancer returning.

It looked at the effects of extending use of the drug letrozole to 10 years in around 1,900 women. The study reported a reduced risk of breast cancer coming back or a new breast cancer developing in the other breast. However, it didn’t show any effects on overall survival.

Letrozole is a type of hormone therapy called an aromatase inhibitor. It’s used to treat breast cancer in women who have gone through the menopause.

Dr Emma Pennery, Clinical Director at Breast Cancer Care, said: ‘These exciting findings confirm that, for certain post-menopausal women with breast cancer, doubling the length of time they take the hormone treatment letrozole can reduce the risk of their cancer coming back.’

The results of the study don’t automatically mean that someone taking letrozole should double the time they take it for. Treatment recommendations will depend on each person’s individual situation.

If you have any questions or concerns about your breast cancer treatment, speak to your specialist team. You can also call Breast Cancer Care’s Helpline on 0808 800 6000.

A chance to have buckets of fun

October sees the 20th anniversary of Asda’s Tickled Pink campaign. To mark the occasion, Asda stores are turning pink and Breast Cancer Care is organising birthday bucket collections. We need people to join in the buckets of birthday fun and volunteer for a collection slot. If you would like to be involved, contact Georgie at Georgie.Davies@breastcancercare.org.uk

Many younger women ‘left in the dark’ over fertility

Just over half (53%) of younger women diagnosed with breast cancer have no discussion with healthcare professionals about fertility preservation options, according to new findings from Breast Cancer Care.

Guidelines from the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) recommend that all women of reproductive age are offered fertility preservation (such as freezing embryos or eggs) before starting breast cancer treatment.

Samia al Qadhi, Chief Executive of Breast Cancer Care, said: ‘These worrying findings suggest younger women with breast cancer are being left in the dark.

‘We are calling for shared responsibility between healthcare professionals to ensure younger women with breast cancer have the conversation they deserve about fertility preservation options as early as possible.’

Breast Cancer Care has developed a Fertility Toolkit for healthcare professionals, to help ensure younger women are given the chance to talk to a fertility specialist.

If you want support on this topic, visit breastcancercare.org.uk or call the Helpline on 0808 800 6000.
Here comes

Whether you’re heading off for (hopefully) warmer climes or making the most of a staycation, we’ve got some tips on what to wear this summer.

Taking the plunge

If you’ve had breast surgery and wear a prosthesis, it can sometimes be a struggle to find suitable swimwear. There are lots of specialist suppliers of mastectomy swimwear (some are featured in our classified ads on page 26) but there are other options too.

Some high street stores like M&S and George at Asda also have mastectomy swimwear ranges.

If you find a non-specialist swimsuit you really like, you can get it pocketed. There are companies that can do this for you (again some of these are mentioned in our classified ads), or you can have a go at creating a pocket yourself. Not all types of swimsuit will be suitable to add pockets to. You may need to look for designs that aren’t too low at the front or ones with wider shoulder straps that aren’t too low under the arms.

Many women feel comfortable in a tankini as it offers a little more coverage and you can buy the top and the bottoms separately.

If you don’t wear a prosthesis and haven’t had a reconstruction, you could look at swimsuits with slightly padded cups which may balance your shape if you have had a single mastectomy (and aren’t large chested). This can also give you some definition if you’ve had a bilateral mastectomy and don’t want to look too flat. You could also look at designs that don’t have cups and have ruching across the chest area.
Going undercover

If you have lymphoedema, warm weather can make swelling worse.

Make sure you protect your affected arm or chest area from the sun. A light summer scarf or a kaftan-style top or dress can help you keep cool and offer some coverage. A high factor sunscreen is also a must.

If you wear a lymphoedema sleeve, summer may be the time to try something different. Pebble UK has a range of bright sleeves in different sizes, lengths and a choice of two compressions. Check with your lymphoedema specialist or treatment team before buying to check it will be suitable for you.

Covering up

If you’ve lost your hair because of chemotherapy, you’ll need to be careful not to get burned if you’re out in the sun.

Sunhats, headscarves and bandanas are all good options to protect your head. Pick a scarf or bandana made from a natural fabric – that way it’s gentle on the scalp and allows it to breathe.

You might also want to try a light turban or beanie style hat – Suburban Turban (details on page 26) has some great looks.
You have to put your life back together

For Hedwig Hegtermans, volunteering for Breast Cancer Care helped her feel normal again after treatment finished.

In September 2012 I turned 50. To my surprise, two weeks later I got my first invitation to have a routine screening mammogram. I went along thinking: it’ll all be fine. Afterwards I got a letter saying they wanted me to go back to the hospital, but I wasn’t worried because I knew a lot of women are called back. I had another mammogram, an ultrasound and a biopsy.

At the time there was a big discussion about whether too many people are having unnecessary surgery because of screening. So I had this whole list of questions. But then I got the results – I had DCIS, which is an early form of breast cancer, but there was also invasive cancer.

My list of questions, and everything else, went out of my head. I was completely shocked. It was recommended that I should have a mastectomy, chemotherapy, probably radiotherapy, Herceptin and hormone treatment. The whole gamut.

A life-saver
I wanted all the information available. My breast care nurse gave me Breast Cancer Care’s booklets about the type of cancer I had and about understanding my pathology report. Then I went on the website and ordered all the booklets that were relevant to me.

Having reliable information, written in an understandable way, made my experience of treatment completely different, although you have no real idea until you go through it. The chemo does such strange things to your body! But the publications were a life-saver. If I compare my breast cancer experience to a journey, then Breast Cancer Care gave me the road map.

Wanting to help
Their information helped me so much that I wanted to give something back. I called the office and said: Do you need volunteers?

I started doing office work in the Helpline. Coming to the office once a week helped me feel normal again. For more than a year your schedule is geared around treatment – you’re living from hospital appointment to hospital appointment. Then when that’s finished you have to put your life back together.

I also trained for other volunteer roles on the Moving Forward courses and Someone Like Me service.

A lot of women feel like they’ve fallen into a sort of black hole after hospital treatment finishes. It’s helped me, too. It’s difficult to recognise that you move forward, because it happens gradually. But when I’m talking about my experiences and listening to the women on the course, I realise that in those three years I have moved forward quite a bit.

This year I’m going to be a model in Breast Cancer Care’s London fashion show. When I found out, I was petrified and excited. But I’m determined to enjoy it.

At the Moving Forward courses I say: of course it was horrible to have to go through the diagnosis, to hear you have breast cancer, and to have treatment. And I hope I never, ever have to go through it again. But on the other hand I’ve met some fantastic people, both medical staff and fellow patients, who I’m still in touch with. So it has brought some positive changes too.

To find out about volunteering opportunities go to breastcancercare.org.uk/volunteer
I felt cheated by my own body

Kerry Allison hated looking at her mastectomy scar. But two years after her breast cancer diagnosis, she found an artistic way to regain her self-esteem.

It was terrible to lose a breast. I knew why it had to go, but it was one of the few aspects of my body I liked, and now I felt my body had let me down. I hated looking at my scar, I hated being flat on one side.

I kept a facade on for everyone around me, but I’ve never cried so much. The only person who saw everything, however black, was my partner Roel. We’ve been together for 16 years, but this diagnosis was extremely tough for both of us.

To the outside world, you look normal with a prosthesis in your bra. But every night and every morning I would be reminded by a big scar across my chest. I felt cheated by my own body.

No reassurances

After treatment finished and the appointment for reconstruction came around, I wasn’t sure what I would do. I led a very active life – ultra-distance off-road running, mountain biking, road biking, ice climbing – and was fearful that any surgery would impact my ability to continue.

I left the reconstruction appointment in tears. The doctor couldn’t answer a lot of my questions about the effect it might have on my activities. The hospital only offered LD flap reconstruction [using tissue taken from the back], but I was concerned it may affect my ability to lift things (like my bike over obstacles) or wear a rucksack. And would I be able to climb or scramble again? I got no reassurances. Being slim and sporty, I didn’t have enough abdominal tissue to use for reconstruction. And it was recommended that I couldn’t have a breast implant as I’d had radiotherapy.

The chance of a ‘boob’ was gone. Now what? I didn’t feel ‘whole’ or ‘complete’ being left like this. I needed something positive.

A perfect design

I’d seen images on the internet of tattoos, but there wasn’t much information about. I did a lot of research, going into (and out of!) many tattoo studios before I found an artist called Anna, at Adorn Studios in Shrewsbury. Roel and I met her and described ideas, and took some pictures and drawings Roel had done. She came up with the most perfect design to give a feminine curve and cover up my scar (and the annoying radiotherapy dot in the middle of my chest!).

I had the tattoo done in August 2015, just under two years after diagnosis. The whole design was done in one day – six hours of tattooing was very painful! The design was of irises as my paternal grandmother, Iris, had cancer at about my age and survived into her 80s.

The impact on my self-esteem was massive. Instead of hiding my scar away, I was making sure everyone saw my tattoo! I absolutely love it. I could never have believed how much better about myself it could make me feel.

Showing the world

From the start of my diagnosis, Roel would take pictures of my scar as a record for us to see things over time. Photography became a strong part of documenting everything, situations both funny and sad. I think it felt constructive for Roel to be able to do something.

There are some lovely, poignant images which we look back on and realise how far we’ve come. This led me to volunteer as a media representative for Breast Cancer Care, and when I was asked to do a photoshoot for World Cancer Day, I agreed. Roel came with me to London and I’m so glad he was there. A couple of glasses of Prosecco, along with a very supportive photography team, and we had a lovely photo of my tattoo.

The reaction was massively positive. Breast Cancer Care’s Facebook page went bonkers with 21,000 likes and some beautiful comments. It felt good!
In 2011, a year after she was diagnosed with breast cancer, Sheila attended a Moving Forward course in Edinburgh.

‘I wasn’t really thinking about meeting other people,’ she says. ‘I was more interested in the practical information the course offered. I have two wonderful daughters who I talk to about anything and didn’t feel I needed any extra emotional support.’

But Sheila was surprised at how she felt talking to the other women in the group. ‘You think you’re OK but maybe you’re not and maybe you need to tell someone. As soon as you arrive there’s this immediate connection and understanding between you. I was very lucky to be in a group who were so willing to talk openly about their experiences and worries.’

Laughter and tears
On the last day of the course, six of the women decided to swap email addresses. They have carried on meeting for lunch every couple of months for the past five years.

‘We talk about everything: families, holidays, check-ups… If we have any concerns we know everyone understands how it feels. Mostly we have laughter – there’s been a lot of laughter – but over the years sometimes we’ve had tears too.

‘I have been surprised at myself. I can be quite a private person and wouldn’t have thought a support group would be my kind of thing. But in a way we are our own little support group.

‘We still meet in the same place every time – the Amber Restaurant in Edinburgh. The waiters know us now and call us “the Amber ladies”!’

Real friendships
What started because of a shared experience of breast cancer has now developed into real friendships. They’ve all seen each other’s lives change since they first met.

‘My first granddaughter was born just before my treatment started. I now have three granddaughters. We also saw two of the group get married last year.

‘There definitely have been positives to this whole experience. I wasn’t expecting to come out having made new friends. This July it will be five years since our first lunch together. We’ll be heading to the Amber Restaurant and celebrating with some bubbly.

‘I generally would not have told my story. But having my own group has been such a wonderful thing for me. If I can encourage even two people to meet up I’ll be happy.’

Moving Forward courses take place throughout the UK. To find out more visit breastcancercare.org.uk or call 0345 077 1893.
Celebrating a birthday I never thought I’d see

After going through treatment for breast cancer twice in 10 years, Rebecca decided to mark her 50th birthday by taking on an exciting new challenge.

I was first diagnosed with breast cancer in August 2003, when I was 30 weeks pregnant with my second daughter. I was terrified but I had a wonderful oncologist. I began two cycles of chemotherapy, until my pregnancy was nearly full term. I was overjoyed when my daughter was born healthy.

I went on to have more chemotherapy, surgery, radiotherapy and tamoxifen, as well as delayed breast reconstruction in 2010.

The thought of taking my daughter to school on her first day kept me going when I wanted to give up. I’m now the incredibly proud mum of a determined, clever and funny 12-year-old.

Feeling isolated
I was diagnosed with regional recurrence in 2013, in the lymph nodes above my collarbone. I had more chemotherapy, radiotherapy and I’m now taking daily hormone therapy.

Both diagnoses were tough. Treatment was tough, recovery was tough, managing people’s uniformed comments and questions was tough. All this took its toll on me, physically and emotionally.

I felt lonely and isolated the first time round, and used Breast Cancer Care’s online Forum daily. I felt instantly connected and relieved to find my rollercoaster of emotions was normal. I didn’t have to hide my fear, sadness and anger.

I’ll never forget how grateful I was for the Forum. My oncologist saved my life physically, but the Forum saved me emotionally.

I began to support people who were just starting on their cancer journey on the Forum. Then I volunteered as a peer and media supporter for Breast Cancer Care, and eventually trained as a counsellor.

New heights
I turned 50 in May 2015, and wanted to mark the occasion – a birthday I never thought I’d see.

I love travelling and had never been to South America. A plan began to emerge when I remembered seeing a celebrity trek to Machu Picchu on TV a few years before.

I signed up to do Breast Cancer Care’s Trek Peru, and set myself a target of raising £5,000. It seemed so unachievable! I held a black-tie ball at a local golf club, and in the end raised £10,000, which I’m incredibly proud of.

I trained with friends and family and lost a stone in the process, though the dog did hate me by the end.

The culture, colour, history, architecture and beauty of Peru will stay with me forever, as will the food! I loved camping in the mountains and waking up to see snow-capped peaks. When we arrived at Machu Picchu the remoteness and beauty of the site were breathtaking.

I’m proud that, despite my cancer diagnosis and treatment, I was able to regain my focus, live my life and achieve my goals.

I was also humbled and grateful for the support of friends and family, as well as hearing the challenges my fellow trekkers had faced.

If Rebecca has inspired you to try a new challenge, head to breastcancercare.org.uk/get-involved
The benefits of physical activity for people with breast cancer are well known, from easing fatigue to improving mental wellbeing. But if you’re struggling with the effects of treatment, getting active is easier said than done. ‘Exercise doesn’t need to be vigorous or high-impact to provide its many health benefits,’ says cancer exercise expert Lizzy Davis. ‘It’s important to start gently and progress slowly.’

Lizzy recommends speaking to your medical team before starting out.

Best foot forward
A brisk walk is the perfect way to increase your activity levels. All you need is a comfortable pair of shoes – and maybe a friend to keep you company. It’s the easiest form of exercise to incorporate into your daily routine. Start slowly and build up the amount of walking you do and your pace gradually. You could use a pedometer app for your phone to track your progress.

Walking for Health is England’s largest network of health walks. Visit walkingforhealth.org.uk

Strike a pose
Yoga combines postures and breathing to boost physical and mental wellbeing. It’s great for improving strength, flexibility and balance.

Dr Jimmy Kwok, Head of Oncology at HCA Healthcare, is a registered yoga teacher and has practised Ashtanga yoga for over a decade. ‘It’s only recently the medical community has awoken to the potential health benefits this ancient practice might have in supporting people with medical conditions, including cancer,’ he says.

There are many styles of yoga, some of which are more vigorous than others. ‘Studies have suggested that breast cancer patients and survivors who practise yoga experience reduced fatigue levels,’ says Jimmy, ‘and that yoga can help lift “chemo-brain”, alleviate depression and lymphoedema, and improve movement after surgery.’

You don’t have to be super flexible to give it a try. ‘Yoga isn’t only about how bendy you are,’ says Jimmy. ‘It’s about focusing your awareness inwards, using physical postures as a moving meditation. With consistent yoga practice, in time, you’ll feel a shift in your flexibility.

‘It’s suitable for everyone, including complete beginners. Cancer patients and survivors with no previous experience can reap its benefits.’

For information on different yoga styles, visit the Dr Yoga website dryoga.co.uk

NHS guidelines recommend that adults should try to be active daily and should do:

- at least 150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity such as cycling or fast walking every week, and
- strength exercises on two or more days a week that work all the major muscles (legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders and arms).

For information about the guidelines and tips to get fit your way, visit nhs.uk

The extra mile
‘You don’t need half the stuff you think you need to start running,’ says Laura Fountain, running coach and founder of lazygirlrunning.com ‘All you need are some clothes you feel comfortable in and you’re good to go.’

Laura says having a goal means you’re more likely to keep running regularly. ‘It doesn’t have to be a marathon – your goal might be to run a lap of the park. Each run you do will take you a few steps towards making it happen.

‘Grab a notebook or diary and, after each run, write down how long you ran for and how you felt. Sometimes it feels like you’re not making progress. But if you can look back and see that a few weeks ago running for 1 minute at a time felt hard, but now 5 minutes is...’
comfortable, it’ll encourage you to keep going.’

Having a running buddy is also great for motivation. ‘Search out a local beginners’ running group, or a friend who wants to start running. A long-distance training partner can work just as well – messaging each other will help you keep motivated.’

Laura also recommends keeping some of that beginners’ eagerness for a few weeks down the line. ‘We all start with lots of enthusiasm,’ she says, ‘keen to get out there and make it happen. And that’s great. But there’s a chance you’ll overdo it. Hitting the gym five times in that first week isn’t a good idea.’

**Make a splash**

Whether butterfly’s your bag or you’re more of a doggy paddler, swimming is a great all-round exercise suitable for all ages. It’s low-impact, so won’t put joints under stress.

Many swimming pools have adult beginner classes and women-only sessions. Find your local pool at swimming.org

You can buy pocketed mastectomy swimwear in some high street shops, large department stores or specialist shops. For tips on choosing swimwear, try Breast Care’s booklet *Breast prostheses, bras and clothes after surgery*.  

**Pedal power**

A means of getting to work or an enjoyable family activity, cycling is a simple way to increase your activity.

A specialist cycle shop can help you choose the right bike for your budget and needs. Some workplaces operate a cycle to work scheme, which can make buying a bike and equipment more affordable. And if you have an old bike, you could think about having it serviced to make sure it’s still suitable for road use.

If you’re a beginner or getting back in the saddle, cycle training can help boost your confidence. Ask your local council what cycle training is available near you. Try Sustrans website sustrans.org.uk for tips on getting started, road safety, bike maintenance and plenty of route maps to inspire you.

**Get active, stay active**

Lizzy suggests the following tips for getting and staying active:

- List all the activities you enjoy, from walking with a friend to gardening. Don’t exclude anything.
- Plan how you’ll deal with any barriers. For example, if you’re more tired today or feel under the weather, choose lighter activities such as walking or take it easy in your exercise class.
- Try to exercise at a time in the day when energy levels are higher.
- Keep an activity diary. It’s a great motivator and helps track your progress.
- Consistency is key. Do something every day, even if it’s a few minutes of walking. No effort is ever wasted.
Managing menopausal symptoms

If you’re struggling with menopausal symptoms as a result of breast cancer treatment, there are several things you can do to help.

Feeling the heat
Hot flushes and night sweats are the most commonly reported menopausal symptom after treatment for breast cancer. For most women, hot flushes will fade over time and become less severe. But some women continue to experience them for months or even years.

Five tips to help with hot flushes
• Try to wear loose-fitting, cotton clothing and dress in layers so you can remove them when a flush starts.
• Carry a fan and bottle of water when you’re out and about.
• Try using a silk pillowcase, or a cool pillow (‘chillow’).
• Monitor what things might trigger a hot flush, and avoid them if possible.
• Try some complementary therapies, such as yoga, massage or acupuncture.

Fatigued or can’t get to sleep
Most women experience fatigue (extreme tiredness) at some point during or after their breast cancer treatment. Menopausal symptoms, like hot flushes and anxiety, can also make it difficult to sleep properly.

Six fatigue and sleep tips
• Try to get into a routine of going to bed and waking up at the same time each day.
• Avoid activities that overstimulate your body or mind just before you go to bed, such as strenuous exercise or watching television.
• Get plenty of fresh air and exercise throughout the day, and stay hydrated.
• Make sure you have plenty of rest between your daily activities, but try to limit naps to less than an hour so that you sleep at night.
• Drink plenty of fluids as dehydration can make you tired.
• Get out of bed if you can’t sleep, and try reading or listening to soft music (don’t clock watch).

Feeling anxious
Being stressed or anxious about your diagnosis and treatment can sometimes make menopausal symptoms worse. If you’re experiencing anxiety, there are various techniques that can help.

Four tips to reduce anxiety
• Relaxation techniques such as mindfulness, meditation or yoga can help to reduce stress and tension.
• Distraction can help by shutting out negative thoughts and stopping them from escalating.
• Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) is a proven technique that helps to change negative patterns of thinking.
• One-to-one counselling allows you to talk through your worries with a trained therapist in a confidential setting.

If you’re feeling very low or depressed, talk to your breast care nurse or GP.

‘Hot flushes usually fade over time but can last for months or years’
Getting active
Regular exercise can help to reduce a number of menopausal symptoms including hot flushes, fatigue and depression.

It’s recommended that adults should do at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity a week but this can be a lot if you’re new to exercise. You may want to build up your activity levels gradually. Examples of activities you could try are:

- brisk walking
- cycling
- hiking or hill walking
- water aerobics or swimming
- gardening or housework
- dancing.

A combination of different types of activity can be more interesting, and will exercise different parts of your body. Physical exercise can also be a fun social event if you join a group or class. For tips on getting started, see page 12.

With complements
Complementary therapies include a wide range of approaches that some women find helpful in relieving menopausal symptoms and improving wellbeing.

As there has been little research into the effects of complementary therapies for breast cancer treatment, you should use them with caution and always check with your GP or specialist team before starting one.

Acupuncture – inserting fine needles into the skin and underlying tissue at specific points, to stimulate nerves and produce endorphins. Some people find this also helps to relieve hot flushes.

Aromatherapy – using essential oils to stimulate the sense of smell, which is believed by aromatherapists to help healing and increase relaxation.

Massage – applying pressure to the body’s muscles and joints, to soothe stiffness and help the blood to flow. This can help to relieve stress and tension.

Mindfulness – focusing on the present moment to try to achieve a sense of calm. This is often combined with yoga, meditation and breathing techniques.

Phytoestrogens
Phytoestrogens are plant oestrogens found in some foods and soya products, and supplements like red clover and black cohosh. Some people include phytoestrogens in their diet, or take phytoestrogen supplements, to try to help with menopausal symptoms such as hot flushes. Because phytoestrogens are classified as foodstuffs, they’re not covered by drug regulations.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) does not recommend taking soy (isoflavones), red clover or black cohosh for menopausal symptoms in women with breast cancer because the evidence on their effectiveness is limited and conflicting.

‘Regular activity can help reduce menopausal symptoms’
I've finished treatment for breast cancer. My doctors said I'm at low risk of the cancer coming back, but I can't stop worrying about secondary breast cancer. What symptoms should I look for?

Most people diagnosed with breast cancer worry about it coming back or spreading elsewhere in the body (called secondary, advanced or metastatic breast cancer). These worries are normal and often lessen with time. Your treatment will have been given to reduce the risk of breast cancer coming back, either in the same breast or elsewhere in the body. However, some people will develop secondary breast cancer, when cancer cells from the breast spread to other parts of the body such as the bones, lungs, liver or brain.

It’s difficult to list all possible symptoms of secondary breast cancer. It’s important to report any new and persistent symptoms that have no obvious cause.

Symptoms to report include:

- pain in your bones (for example in the back, hips or ribs) that doesn’t improve with pain relief or lasts for more than one to two weeks and is often worse at night
- unexplained weight loss and a loss of appetite
- a constant feeling of nausea
- discomfort or swelling under the ribs or across the upper abdomen
- feeling constantly tired
- a dry cough or a feeling of breathlessness
- severe or ongoing headaches
- changed vision or speech.

Many symptoms of secondary breast cancer can be similar to other conditions. For example, aches and pains in the bones can be due to ageing, arthritis or side effects from treatment. Tiredness and loss of appetite can...
Your specialist team will know you have breast cancer because of what the cells look like under a microscope after your biopsy. A scan of the upper part of your body (chest and abdomen) may be recommended to check the breast cancer hasn’t spread beyond the lymph nodes. If a scan doesn’t show any spread, your treatment is likely to include surgery to remove the nodes under your arm and the whole breast (a mastectomy). A mastectomy is usually recommended because it’s difficult to know exactly where in the breast the cancer is. Chemotherapy is often recommended as part of the treatment and some people will also need radiotherapy. But your treatment plan will depend on your individual situation, and your team will discuss what’s best for you.

Occult breast cancer is uncommon, and because of this you may feel isolated. Breast Cancer Care has an online Forum where people can post messages of support and share information. Visit forum.breastcancercare.org.uk

The Someone Like Me service can match you with someone who has experience of the issues you’re facing, who understands and has been trained to help. You can find out more information about this telephone and email service at breastcancercare.org.uk

Q A biopsy of a lump under my arm has shown I have breast cancer, but the doctors can’t feel or see cancer in my breast on a mammogram, ultrasound or MRI. I’ve been told I have ‘occult breast cancer’. What does this mean?

A Breast cancer that can’t be felt or seen with imaging (for example a mammogram or ultrasound) is known as occult breast cancer. It’s usually diagnosed when someone is being investigated for symptoms elsewhere in the body, such as enlarged lymph nodes under the arm. Sometimes a biopsy from another part of the body shows cells that are secondary breast cancer cells, which means there is a primary cancer in the breast even though it can’t be felt or seen. Being diagnosed with occult breast cancer is rare.

Your questions answered

also be normal side effects that many people have after cancer treatment. And breathlessness and coughs can be symptoms of a cold or flu.

If any new symptom hasn’t improved within around 10–14 days, it’s worth getting it checked.

Rather than worry alone, talk to your breast care nurse, hospital doctor or GP. If symptoms don’t improve, your doctor may want to investigate the many possible causes.

If you have a question about breast cancer, call Breast Cancer Care free on 0808 800 6000. You can also Ask Our Nurses by email: go to breastcancercare.org.uk/atan

To order or download Breast Cancer Care’s publications, call the number above or visit breastcancercare.org.uk/publications
Summer 2006: a new website called Twitter is launched; Latin pop princess Shakira tops the singles chart with her truth-telling hips; and a new magazine called Vita makes its way out into the world for the first time. To celebrate this momentous event, we asked five people who’ve appeared on our pages: How has life been since you were in Vita?

10 years after diagnosis

Then
‘I think I’ve grown up a lot this year. When I found out I had breast cancer, I was so angry and confused. I was so scared my boyfriend, Paul, had to drag me along to the doctor when I first found the lump. I didn’t think it should happen to someone my age.’

Now
‘It has now been over 10 years since I was diagnosed with breast cancer when I was 20 years old. The only time I think about breast cancer is when I’m volunteering with Breast Cancer Care. My fiancé Paul and I now have a two-year-old daughter named Chloe.’

Continuing to embrace life
Amanda Humphry appeared in the Summer 2009 issue.

Then
‘I was diagnosed with breast cancer three weeks after completing the London Marathon. I’ve definitely slowed down both physically and mentally since my treatment, but I’ve got no intention of stopping running. I’m hoping to run the London Marathon again in 2010.’

Now
‘With every year marking a step further away from my cancer diagnosis and treatment, I continue to enjoy and embrace life. The last few years have seen a change of career, so more time for all the things I enjoy, plenty more running, and even being a model in The Show in 2015. I continue to support Breast Cancer Care and recommend their services.’

A decade
We catch up with some of the wonderful people who’ve graced the pages of Vita over the past 10 years.
I’m still here!
France Dean appeared in the Spring 2013 issue.

Then
‘Since my secondary breast cancer diagnosis, I’ve been trying to make every second count. As well as going on some fantastic holidays and trying new things like learning to ice skate, I’ve taken part in some wonderful events.’

Now
‘I’m delighted to say that three years on I am still here. The feature was entitled “I want to make every day count”, and I can honestly say I am still living that mantra! I campaign lots (with Breast Cancer Care) about secondary breast cancer to raise awareness of the disease, and what living with it means to me and others.’

Still challenging myself
Lorraine Walker appeared in the Summer 2009 issue.

Then
As a breast cancer nurse, Lorraine is experienced in supporting patients. But little did she expect that the women she has helped would give her the strength to take on some tough physical challenges. ‘The cycle I did in Vietnam was much harder than I expected. It was 110 degrees some days but there was no way I was giving up.’

Now
‘Since then I have become a nurse consultant, which is something I had worked towards achieving. I’m still undertaking challenges for Breast Cancer Care. I did the New York Marathon several years ago, which was amazing. Last year I went to Costa Rica and have signed up for Trek Kerala to raise money in November.’

First male cover star
Doug Harper appeared in the Winter 2013 issue.

Then
‘I went to see my GP with a hard lump under my left nipple, after some prompting from my partner who noticed my nipple was inverted. It did not cross our minds that it could be breast cancer; neither of us knew that men could get it.’

Now
‘I was honoured to be the first man on the cover of Vita, and it was good to get the breast cancer story from the male side out there in public. I continue to try to make men aware that they can get breast cancer, in between fighting off the effects I get from taking tamoxifen.’
When breast cancer cells spread to the bone, a number of different symptoms can affect your quality of life. Knowing what and who can help you manage the impact of your diagnosis can help you feel more in control.

Managing pain
Pain relief is important for anyone with cancer in the bone. If pain isn’t controlled, it can affect your ability to work, move around, travel or carry out everyday tasks.

Most pain can be controlled. GPs or oncologists can help with pain management, but you may benefit from the advice of palliative and supportive care experts, who specialise in pain control. Your GP or specialist can refer you. An occupational therapist may also be helpful for support and ideas for ways to help with everyday activities.

Coping with side effects
Side effects from treatments, such as hormone therapy and bone modifying-drugs, can have a big impact on your ability to cope. Side effects like hot flushes and insomnia can be distressing.

Discussing side effects with your specialist team or GP can be useful as there may be therapies that can help. Meeting others with a similar diagnosis can also let you share experiences and get tips on ways of coping.

Changes in bone structure
Changes in bone structure caused by the cancer may mean affected bones are at risk of fracture.

This includes the bones in the spine, which can cause pressure on the spinal cord, known as spinal cord compression. Symptoms include an increase in pain around the spine, tenderness over the spine in the area affected or a change in sensation such as pins and needles.

The changes may also allow too much calcium to be released into the bloodstream (hypercalcaemia). Symptoms include nausea, vomiting, constipation or drowsiness.

It’s important to be aware of these and other symptoms of spinal cord compression and hypercalcaemia, and know who to report them to so they can be dealt with immediately.

Diet and activity
Small changes to diet or daily physical activity help some people improve their wellbeing. Many people with secondary breast cancer in the bone will be prescribed calcium and vitamin D supplements to help maintain bone health. But it’s also advisable to have a balanced diet including foods containing calcium and vitamin D.

Regular physical activity may help strengthen bones, reduce pain and reduce some side effects of treatment, but you may need to take extra care. Choose low-impact activities such as walking and swimming, and avoid extreme ranges of motion (twisting or large bends of the spine).

Help at work
Many people with secondary breast cancer continue to work, whether for financial reasons or because they want to carry on as normal.

If you find it difficult to cope at work, it may help to talk to your employer about making practical changes, adjusting your hours or changing your role.

Emotional support
Your diagnosis may leave you feeling a range of emotions. There may be times when you feel unable to cope. Talking to a counsellor or other people with secondary breast cancer can help. You can also contact the Breast Cancer Care Helpline on 0808 800 6000 to talk through concerns and find out what support is available in your area.

For details of Breast Cancer Care’s Living with Secondary Breast Cancer service, turn to page 25.
A picture of calm

Georgia Wilson picks up her felt tips to explore a colourful form of relaxation.

Colouring in is back. It’s been hard to miss this colourful craze taking over bookstores worldwide, which has adults turning to colouring books to reduce stress and anxiety.

We all know what it’s like to feel stressed sometimes, but too much anxiety can have a negative impact on our daily lives and our ability to think clearly. Finding ways to relax is essential to stop stress getting on top of us, but many of us find it difficult to find the time or have forgotten how.

Maybe that’s why millions of adults are going back to their school days to relearn the art of relaxation. While many relaxation techniques require learning and practice, anyone can colour in. And whether you have five minutes or an hour, the benefits can be surprising.

Relaxing mind and body
Breast Cancer Care Helpline Coordinator Lisa French, who is also a qualified hypnotherapist, believes putting aside time to relax can make a big difference to your wellbeing.

‘Focusing on something repetitive and calming like colouring in can take your mind away from any stressful thoughts that might be going round and round in your head.

‘The concentration required quickly absorbs you. Your body relaxes and your mind relaxes. Even a short time colouring in can give you a renewed perspective.’

Colour, chat and chill
Lisa has brought some colour and relaxation to our London office, organising lunchtime colouring sessions for staff and volunteers. What started as a one-off is now a weekly event as more and more people are getting hooked on the calming benefits.

Lunchtime colourer Anna says: ‘In the middle of a busy week, allowing myself a “time-out”, where I can stay in the here and now while colouring a restful picture, reinvigorates me and helps give my mind some rest.’

It’s easy to start colouring on your own or in a group. So why not pencil in some relaxation time for yourself?
Cake it easy!

Try these gorgeous cupcakes, a perfect treat for a summery afternoon tea.

BerryWorld strawberry and passion fruit cupcakes

Makes 12

- 150ml pot natural yoghurt
- 3 eggs, beaten
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 175g golden caster sugar
- 240g self-raising flour
- 1 tsp baking powder
- pinch of salt
- 175g unsalted butter, melted

For the icing:
- 125g cream cheese
- 125g butter, softened
- 350g icing sugar
- 14 strawberries
- 1 passion fruit, seeds and juice

1. Line a 12-hole muffin tin with paper cases and heat oven to 190°C/fan 170°C/gas 5.
2. In a jug, mix the yoghurt, eggs and vanilla extract. Put the dry ingredients, plus a pinch of salt, into a large bowl and make a well in the middle.
3. Add the yogurt mix and melted butter and quickly fold in with a spatula or metal spoon – don’t over mix it.
4. Spoon into the cases and bake for 20 minutes or until golden, risen and springy to the touch. Cool on a wire rack.
5. In a large bowl whisk the cream cheese and butter until smooth, then add the icing sugar and beat again until you have a smooth, stiff icing. Mash two strawberries and beat into the icing, then add approximately half of the passion fruit seeds and juice, until you have an icing that holds its shape but is easily spreadable.
6. Pipe or spoon the frosting onto the cakes and top each with a strawberry and a drizzle of the remaining passion fruit.

Do something special this summer

If you like having a jolly nice time eating cake with your favourite people, then Strawberry Tea could be just the thing this summer! Host an afternoon tea for family and friends and the money you raise will help people affected by breast cancer.

Whether your event is big or small, it’s a lovely way to show you care. Go to breastcancercare.org.uk/strawberry or call 0300 100 4442 to get your free fundraising kit with everything you need.
Ladies Day 2015 was a fantastic success, with a huge crowd of racegoers who helped raise £25,000 for our vital services in the beautiful sunshine. We had bucket collections, a fundraising stall and a pop-up photo booth. Pauline, who was a model in Breast Cancer Care’s annual fashion show, helped judge the Most Stylish Racegoer competition.

We can’t wait for this year’s event, which will be bigger and better, and will raise at least £25,000 again.

The extravaganza will take place on Saturday 13 August. It’s set to be a day out to remember, with a fantastic line-up of racing and a performance from the original Pop Idol Will Young. There will also be the chance to win a holiday to the Seychelles worth £8,000 in the Most Stylish Racegoer competition.

Special offer for Vita readers!
Newbury Racecourse is offering £5 off a Premier Ladies Day ticket (usually £45) for all Vita readers.

To book to your ticket and receive your special discount, visit newburyracecourse.co.uk and enter code BCC16 at the checkout. Or call the booking line on 01635 40015 and mention the code BCC16 when purchasing your tickets.

Newbury Racecourse will also donate 25% from the price of your ticket to Breast Cancer Care when you book using this code.

If you have any questions about booking a ticket or would like to be part of our volunteer team on the day, call Georgie Davies in the Corporate Partnerships team on 020 7960 3419 or email georgie.davies@breastcancercare.org.uk

Breast Cancer Care is partnering with Newbury Racecourse for Ladies Day, the biggest event of their summer.
Immerse yourself in a magical world of ancient ruins, remote Andean mountain passes and sun-dappled rainforests with Team Breast Cancer Care as we Trek Peru.

We’ll be there from day one to make sure you enjoy an incredible and unforgettable adventure with your newfound friends. Together, you’ll laugh, cry and encourage each other all the way to your spectacular destination: the lost city of Machu Picchu.

With every step you take on the hike of your life, you’ll be supporting women who are facing the biggest challenge of theirs – breast cancer. With your help, we’ll be able to provide more care, support and information whenever it’s needed. From the moment someone notices something isn’t right, through their treatment and beyond, with your support we’ll be there.

Will you join Breast Cancer Care for our breathtaking challenge?

Put your best foot forward and sign up today at breastcancercare.org.uk/peru

‘When I decided to take on Trek Peru, I knew it had to be for a cause that really mattered. There are now so many women are affected by breast cancer every year, so joining #TeamBCCare was the natural choice. Reaching the Sun Gate at the entrance to Machu Picchu was incredibly emotional. We watched and waited for the mist to clear, praying to the sun gods that we’d have a good view! Eventually, the clouds lifted – it was the most spectacular thing I’ve ever seen.’

Laura, Trek Peru 2015
Living with Secondary Breast Cancer
Share experiences and tips with other people living with secondary breast cancer. These regular meet-ups include expert guest speakers and are held throughout the UK. Jaff Newton, 74, from Milton Keynes, was diagnosed with secondary breast cancer over 10 years ago. Jaff has been going to Living with Secondary Breast Cancer meet-ups in Oxford, and will now be able to start attending sessions closer to home.

‘When I was told I had incurable breast cancer over 10 years ago there was no support,’ says Jaff. ‘So going to a Living with Secondary Breast Cancer group made a massive difference, meeting others with the same questions, worries and hopes.

‘Secondary breast cancer can be a rollercoaster of appointments, treatments and emotions. These sessions offer help to put things into perspective, making it all just that bit easier to cope.’

Moving Forward
Struggling to get back to ‘normal’ after breast cancer treatment? Moving Forward courses are run in partnership with the NHS across the UK.

England
• Barnsley • Basingstoke • Birmingham • Bolton • Bournemouth • Chelmsford • Doncaster • Enfield • Grimsby • Huddersfield • Liverpool • London • Maidstone • Nottingham • Oxford • Poole • Salford • Scunthorpe • Sheffield • South Tees • Southampton • Southend • Stockport • Warwick • Winchester • Worthing • Wythenshawe

Scotland
• Edinburgh • Fife • Forth Valley • Glasgow • Lanarkshire • Livingston

Wales
• Bangor • Bridgend • Cardiff • Haverfordwest • Hollywell • Llanelli • Llantrisant • Neath Port Talbot • Newport • Swansea

Younger Women Together
Two days of information, support and sharing. Come to a Younger Women Together event and meet around 30 other women under 45 who’ve been diagnosed with primary breast cancer. All food and accommodation provided free.

• 23–24 September: Leeds
• 4–5 November: Bristol
• 3–4 February 2017: Liverpool

Support in your area

Find the right support for you

Call 0345 077 1893
Visit breastcancercare.org.uk

Email Living with Secondary Breast Cancer: secondaryservices@breastcancercare.org.uk
Email Moving Forward: movingforward@breastcancercare.org.uk
Email Younger Women Together: youngerwomen@breastcancercare.org.uk
Anita Care  Offering post-surgical ladies innovative and discreet breast forms alongside specially designed, beautiful lingerie and swimwear, which allows wearers to feel comfortable and confident in all areas of their life, without compromising on colour, style and luxury. For all enquiries please call 020 8446 7478 or visit www.anita.com

About The Girl  Fabulous, stylish pocketed bikinis, tankinis and swimsuits, and gorgeous post-surgery lingerie. Receive a complimentary swim beanie with all pocketed swimwear purchases. Excellent personal customer services, advice and care, easy returns policy and quick despatch. Find our blog on style after surgery, visit www.aboutthegirl.co.uk or call 01444 417 791.

Banbury Postiche offers a fantastic range of acrylic wigs with a next day delivery service available. We have a Customer Care team to support you, whatever your needs. Our purely wigs range is guaranteed to have a style to suit and delight you. Please take a look at our website www.wigsuk.com or call 01295 757 408.

Betty and Belle  Winner of ‘Best lingerie shop in the UK’ award. Exquisite lingerie and specialist bra fitting shop with an extensive range of bras and swimwear to suit mastectomy, lumpectomy and reconstructions. Bra alteration and pocketing service. Visit www.bettyandbelle.co.uk or call in at 35 Oxford Rd, Cheshire WA14 2ED; 0161 929 1472.

Cool and Beautiful Nightwear  Cool, ultra feminine, 100% cotton, mastectomy nightdresses. Discreetly pocketed for soft prostheses, with plenty of fabric in the skirt to allow for extra comfort. Designed as a result of personal experience and made in the UK. Latest nightdress available up to size 22 from www.coolandbeautiful.com or call 01568 750011 for information.

Drain dollsies  Surgical drain bags which carry and conceal drains after breast surgery, for example double mastectomy. These pretty cotton shoulder bags make mobilising with drains post-op much more manageable. Coming in a variety of styles with 10% of sales donated to Genesis breast cancer prevention charity. www.draindollies.co.uk

Nicola Jane  Experts in post-surgery fashion since 1984. Our NEW collection for 2016 features beautiful bras and stunning swimwear that will help restore your confidence after surgery. All with fitted pockets to hold your prosthesis securely. Free returns and shops throughout the UK. Call 0845 265 7595 or visit www.nicolajane.com

Pebble UK  Over 90 designs of seam-free compression arm sleeves with matching gauntlets or gloves, specifically designed for lymphoedema (swelling). Made with moisture-wicking fibres, unscented aloe vera treatment for skin-friendly softness and fine-knit construction for a lightweight feel. Available in three sizes, two lengths and two compressions. Call 0800 433 4757 or visit www.pebbleuk.com

Silima FOR YOU!  Our 2016/17 catalogue brings you stylish and supportive lingerie. Please check out our value-for-money range of everyday bras from £17.95 each (Diana and Victoria) or treat yourself to our French design heritage with Amelie or Suzanne, the latest addition to our range. Look no further for fashion and femininity! Call 01295 220 524 or visit www.conturabelle.co.uk

Suburban Turban  offers stylish, fashionable headwear and accessories for women experiencing hair loss. The collection offers styles for all occasions – from beautifully simple, super-soft jersey hats to chic berets and sparkling cocktail hats. We also offer a range of natural skincare products, chosen for their gentle, soothing benefits. To shop the range go to www.suburbanturban.co.uk or call 01306 640 123.

amoena  From gorgeous lingerie to luxurious loungewear, stunning swimwear and high-performance fitness clothing, we have every moment of your day covered. Relax in the knowledge that, with their fine integral pockets, our bras and clothing will hold your breast form or partial-shaper safely and securely.

Browse or buy our full range: www.amoena.co.uk, call 0845 434 7334 for our latest catalogue, save 15% code VITA15.

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TenderCush offers comfort and support following breast cancer surgery. Whether you’re sleeping, travelling, around the home or socialising, our products are specially designed to help. Our fabulous patented Shoulder Bag is a truly liberating product which offers support when out and about. Available now at www.tendercush.co.uk or call 07980 470 072. Also on Facebook and Twitter.

Trulife breast forms and accessories restore confidence, self-esteem and ultimately contribute to a better quality of life for women following breast surgery. With over 50 years of experience in breast care, we lead through innovation and offer the most natural, coolest and softest breast forms available. Call 0800 716770 or to see our range visit www.trulifebreastcare.com

Woman Zone To see our latest ranges of swimwear, lingerie and prosthesis or to order an up-to-date brochure visit our website (www.woman-zone.co.uk) or call us on 01925 220 932. With over 50 years’ experience we can offer an unrivalled service of care and advice, including free fitting, made to measure swimwear and pocketing services.

Find our tins a home

Placing collection tins is an easy way to raise money so we can support women with breast cancer every day.

Simply place tins wherever change is given, such as your local newsagents, and pop back every couple of months to collect the money.

For more information, please get in touch with our dedicated Volunteer Hub at Volunteer.Hub@breastcancercare.org.uk or call 0114 263 6120.
If you have already sent us this form, you will continue to receive Vita four times per year. Breast Cancer Care volunteers will be sent Vita automatically. We will not pass your details on to any third parties. If you are a member of a support group or a healthcare professional and would like multiple copies, please call 0345 092 0808.

Name

Address

Postcode

To receive future issues of Vita call us on 0345 092 0808, email vita@breastcancercare.org.uk or cut off this slip, fill in your details and return it in an envelope to our freepost address: Breast Cancer Care, RRKZ-ARZY-YCKG, 5-13 Great Suffolk Street, London SE1 0NS.