REAL-LIFE COVER STAR

Chat show showstopper
TV’s Trisha Goddard talks breast cancer, modelling and running

ABSOLUTELY FABULOUS
Backstage at Breast Cancer Care’s London fashion show

UNITED WE STAND
One couple’s story of breast cancer’s impact on their wedding plans

A–Z OF HEALTH TIPS
Great ways to get the new year off to a healthy start
Are you moving forward after treatment?

Our Moving Forward services and information are here to help anyone living with and beyond breast cancer approach life after treatment with more confidence.

For more information call our Helpline on 0808 800 6000, visit www.breastcancercare.org.uk or contact your local centre (details on page 23).
DRESSING WITH confidence

Like many women who have had breast cancer, Jane Buckley found it difficult finding suitable clothes after treatment. She set up Jane’s Place, an online fashion blog offering tips and fashion articles suitable for other women who have had breast cancer. Here are some of her top tips for dressing this winter.

‘Try fabrics in rich winter colours of cranberry, plum and claret.’

Dark, bold patterns disguise any asymmetries in our silhouette but they don’t have to be dull. A key trend this winter is statement prints including animal prints, baroque styles and 60s block graphics. Spots are everywhere this season and give a fun twist to most outfits. Try fabrics in rich winter colours of cranberry, plum and claret.

Clockwise from left: pink printed blouse, £18 Bonmarché; DE animal print top, £25 Bonmarché; Principles by Ben de Lisi colour block tunic, £45 at Debenhams; retro prim brown belted cape, £35 Matalan; plaid cape, £29.99 TK Maxx; F&F tweed duffel detail cape, £35 F&F at Tesco; faux fur tippet, £22 Accessorize; digital print butterfly scarf, £22 Accessorize; romantic rose statement necklace, £30 Accessorize
TV’s Trisha Goddard tells Laura Fountain how running helped her through treatment for breast cancer and why cooking shepherd’s pie made her feel normal.

As the models took to the stage for the Breast Cancer Care fashion show in October, one of them was no stranger to the spotlight. Having presented talk shows for many years, Trisha Goddard should be more comfortable than most with having a room full of people watch her every move. But this, she says, is far from the case.

‘Everyone keeps saying to me “You’re all right, you’re used to being in front of people,” but this is totally different. When I’m interviewing people I’m thinking about the person I’m interviewing and thinking of it technically. I once introduced a concert with Nelson Mandela, in front of 40,000 people, and friends say to me “Oh, you’ve done that, you’ll be fine.” But all I could see were lights and I was more interested in the fact I was interviewing Nelson Mandela and meeting him. Walking alone along the catwalk is a different thing altogether.’

Trisha was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2008 after a visit to the hospital for an x-ray on a running injury. ‘The lady doing the x-ray asked me if I’d been for an x-ray before’, says Trisha. ‘I said “A mammogram; does that count?” She asked when it was and I couldn’t remember so she looked it up and said, “2001. Due for another one.” She booked me in and things went pretty quickly from then. So thank God for running.’

But it’s not just the diagnosis that Trisha says she owes to her love of running. Lacing up her trainers and getting out into the fresh air is something that has helped her to deal with the physical and emotional effects of her treatment.

‘I went running every day, even if I just staggered for an hour or so. Even if I didn’t feel like doing it. First thing I did when I got out of bed was put my running gear on so it wasn’t a question of not feeling like it. Nine times out of ten I did not feel like it but I knew at 17–20 minutes that I’d get that kick. So I thought “what’s 17 minutes?”

Chat show showstopper
Paperback writer

It’s common for people with breast cancer to want to tell their story. Stephanie Butland has done just that; her first book was published in October.

After being diagnosed with breast cancer in 2008, Stephanie decided to use what she had learnt in her work as a trainer to help cope with treatment and its side effects. Her job involved teaching clients skills like cognitive behavioural therapy and neuro-linguistic programming, and she began using techniques such as these on herself.

Stephanie also started a blog, Bahl to Cancer, which covered her treatment and the way she was dealing with it. Some months later, she began writing a book called How I Said Bah! to Cancer: A Guide to Thinking, Laughing, Living and Dancing Your Way Through. She recalls, ‘When you look back on things, you think “that really was quite grim.” I spoke to family and friends for the book and hearing how the experience had been for them was difficult. I found writing a therapeutic process in the end but also quite traumatic at times.’

After she had finished her manuscript, Stephanie found an agent to represent her and within months she’d received an offer to publish the book. She recalls, ‘Editing the book was very weird. I spent a weekend reading through the changes really quickly and it felt like I was cantering through a couple of years of my life.’

Stephanie is now working on a second book, Thrive: the Bah! Guide to Wellness after Cancer, which covers adapting to life after treatment. She is also writing a novel, Surrounded by Water. As she points out, ‘A lot of my first book was about not being defined by cancer, so while I feel I may want to write more about cancer in future, I also wanted to write something completely different.’

Asked for her advice to anyone else interested in being published, Stephanie is clear that the readers are key: ‘Be true to your own story but try to think what you can pull out of it that will be useful to someone else. Make sure your writing has something in it for other people.’


More tips for getting published

1) Don’t see it as the be all and end all – just a select few books ever get published, so only write if you find the process rewarding.

2) After writing your story, try to get an agent – it’s extremely rare to have a manuscript accepted without one. Try researching on the internet and using The Writers’ and Artists’ Yearbook as starting points.

3) Don’t give up easily – J.K. Rowling’s first Harry Potter novel was rejected by 12 publishers before being accepted, so keep trying.

4) Consider self-publishing – even if your book isn’t what publishers are looking for, you may still want to share your story with family and friends. Many people find self-publishing (or putting their experience online) is right for them.
The big reveal

Seeing your mastectomy scar for the first time is an emotional time for many women who have had breast cancer. Lisa Donaldson remembers how she felt when she first saw hers.

A few days after surgery it was time to face my next fear: the sight of my flat chest. I had to remove the thick white dressings, currently under transparent film, to survey the ‘damage’ and get an idea of how I would look from now on. What does a mastectomy scar look like? Will I ever feel comfortable being naked again, in the gym changing rooms or with my partner Richard?

When I left hospital, a nurse gave me my ‘softie’ (a soft prosthesis or breast form to go in the bra cup). I had not once considered what my bra would look like with an empty cup – what had I expected to wear – a sling? I did use the softie once, at a friend’s wedding, but it went walkabout inside my outfit. Fortunately, I recovered it before it made an entrance on the dance floor, where no doubt someone would’ve slipped on it and landed in the cake!

Taking a look

The nurses recommended removing the dressings in the shower so into the shower I went. I was alone in the house and knew I had to get this over with. As the hot water streamed over me, I looked down at the dressings and saw that the edges had started to curl. As I peeled the clear film away from my skin, I could see the slightly faded blue marker.pen lines that had been drawn on me before the operation. The thick dressing pad started to come away from my body with the sticky film as I slowly eased the whole dressing back from the wound.

Stitches appeared one by one. They looked like a tiny barbed-wire fence with the little tails sticking out. There weren’t half as many as I’d expected to find. As the water continued to cascade down on me, I stared down at my stitch line: my ‘smile.’ For the first time, I felt a huge surge of relief. My breast had gone, and with it, the cancer!

I got out of the shower, and forced myself to look in the mirror. Despite knowing it would be upsetting, I had to get it over with, I had to know. Oh boy. It looked worse straight on. I stared in the mirror and the tears started to flow – but not because of the sight; they were tears of grief for my loss, tears of relief that the cancer had been removed, tears of acceptance of what had been done, and tears of fear about what I might yet have to face.

Lisa Donaldson’s book The Big C in my Bra – Dealing With BRCA is available to read online at lisajdonaldson.com

Her website contains a link to Lisa’s JustGiving page in aid of Breast Cancer Care.

More information

Breast Cancer Care’s A confident choice booklet gives practical information and suggestions about breast prostheses, bras and clothes for women who have had breast surgery.
Experiencing depression is not unusual for people who have been diagnosed with breast cancer, although many find it hard to talk about. Here, we look at how to recognise whether you have any signs or symptoms of depression, and examine some ways to cope with it.

‘According to surveys, between 15 and 50% of people with cancer will have depression at some point’ says consultant clinical psychologist Dr Frances Goodhart. This can occur at any stage during diagnosis or treatment, or even many years after treatment has finished.

Feeling depressed is a common response for people who feel low in energy, gloomy or lacking in motivation – all of which may happen after being diagnosed with breast cancer. Initially, you may enjoy life less and it is often hard to imagine things improving. Many people who feel depressed find it difficult to maintain their usual social contacts, which in turn can make them feel isolated and unsupported.

However, as you adjust to what has happened, you will usually gain energy and your mood will improve.

How to recognise depression

If negative thoughts are interfering with your life and don’t go away within a
A healthy lifestyle doesn’t have to be hard work. Try adding a few of our tips into your life for an easy way to healthy living.

Arm and shoulder exercises can help you regain strength and mobility after surgery and/or radiotherapy.

Bone health is important throughout life. It becomes more important as we get older or if illness or treatment increases the risk of bone problems. Regular weight-bearing exercise and a well-balanced diet can help maintain bone health. For more information see the free Breast Cancer Care factsheet Breast cancer treatment and the risk of osteoporosis.

Drinking alcohol is okay, but only in moderation. Try not to regularly exceed 3–4 units of alcohol a day if you’re male and 2–3 units a day if you’re female. ‘Regularly’ means drinking every day or most days of the week. A small glass of wine usually contains around 1½ units of alcohol.

Enjoy yourself – if you’re hoping to get fit and exercise more, choosing an activity you like doing will make you more likely to stick with it.

Fly fishing might not be something you’ve considered before, but Casting for Recovery offers weekend retreats at no cost (including accommodation, meals and professional instruction) to people who have had breast cancer. See www.castingforrecovery.org.uk

Getting fitter, feeling stronger, a free exercise DVD by Breast Cancer Care, is designed specially for people who have had treatment for breast cancer. It includes exercise classes to help regain arm movement and improve general fitness.

Holidays, weekends away and days out can be a great way to explore new places and recharge your batteries.

Inspiration can come from all sorts of places. Breast Cancer Care’s One-to-One Support service can help by allowing you to share problems with someone who’s been in a similar situation.

Complementary therapies are considered by some people to help with the side effects of treatment. If you’re considering trying one, always check with your specialist team first that it won’t interfere with your treatment.
in touch

UNITED
we stand

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ABSOLUTELY fabulous

Vita goes backstage at Breast Cancer Care’s London fashion show to catch up with some of the models.

Smiles and tears were definitely in vogue at Breast Cancer Care’s annual fashion show in London. As the 24 models, all of whom have had a diagnosis of breast cancer, took to the stage for an emotional evening the crowd cheered, cried and stood to show their support.

Isobel Wilson was diagnosed with breast cancer in 1996. For the past 12 years she has been a volunteer for Breast Cancer Care and has always wanted to take part in the fashion show.

‘When I was told I was going to be in The Show I could have danced on the tables I was so chuffed,’ says Isobel. ‘It’s a dream come true.’

‘I applied twice before and didn’t get in but this time I was lucky.

‘It’s been absolutely fantastic. It couldn’t have been any better. Meeting the other models has been so inspirational. They are just so lovely.

‘Seeing all my friends in the audience who I know from my breast cancer support group has made it really special. When I came on stage and they all shouted and yelled for me, that was really nice.’

Vicky Davies was chosen to be a model in The Show after seeing an article on last year’s event in You magazine and applying to take part.

Vicky was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2009. She says: ‘For a long time I felt desperate and totally consumed with fear. My children were so young and I could not believe this was happening to us. I lived under a black cloud and it followed me everywhere.

‘Two years on, however, I feel I am emerging from these hard times stronger, fitter and once again happy. I’m really pleased to be part of the show. It has been an incredible experience.

‘I hope I can make a difference by showing others that there can, despite everything, be life after breast cancer.’

Models clockwise from left: Laura Ashurst, Christine Barker, Dave Abbott, Vicky Davies, Isobel Wilson

More information

If you’d like to be a model in next year’s shows in either London or Glasgow, you can find out more by visiting breastcancercare.org.uk/theshow Be sure to have a look soon, as the closing date for entries will be around the end of January!
Ask a breast cancer expert

Q I’m just about to finish five years of the hormone drug tamoxifen and I’m feeling a bit worried about not taking anything. Does this mean the cancer is more likely to come back now? My friend has said he read that it’s better to take it for longer. Is this true?

A We often hear from people who feel apprehensive as their treatment finishes and it’s not unusual to have a number of questions and uncertainties as this time approaches.

As your friend rightly says, there is research looking at whether there is any benefit to taking tamoxifen for more than five years. Two studies (known as ATLAS and aTTom) reported early findings a few years ago which suggested that taking tamoxifen for longer might reduce the risk of a person’s breast cancer coming back or of extending their survival. But we need more information and the trials need to follow people for a longer period. Because tamoxifen can have some potentially quite serious side effects it is important that there is good evidence to back up any changes to current practice. Currently the guidelines recommend stopping tamoxifen after five years.

Research has shown that the advantages of taking tamoxifen for five years reduces both the risk of breast cancer coming back and of developing breast cancer in the opposite breast. This effect can be seen even 10 years after you stop taking the drug so the benefits of taking it continue for many years.

I’d encourage you to discuss any concerns you have about finishing treatment with your cancer specialist as they will have the most detailed information about your individual circumstances. If you are now being cared for by your GP you could always request that they refer you back for a consultation. You might also be interested in Breast Cancer Care’s Moving Forward resource pack for people who are living with, and beyond, breast cancer. It contains lots of information on topics ranging from fatigue to work and finances and has a special section about feelings you might have as treatment ends. You can order this for free from the website or Helpline.
Finger leeking good

These healthy meals are ideal to warm you up on a wintry evening.

Leek and Stilton soup

Serves 6
Ingredients
- 8 leeks, trimmed, washed and finely chopped in a food processor
- 2 sticks of celery, roughly chopped
- 50g butter
- 1tbsp light and mild olive oil
- 1 large baking potato, peeled and diced
- 1.5l litre vegetable stock
- 150ml single cream
- 225g Stilton, crumbled
- salt and pepper

Method
1. Cook (but don’t brown) the shredded leek and celery in the butter and olive oil for 5 minutes to soften. Add the diced potato and stock. Bring to a gentle simmer, cover and cook for 30 minutes.
2. Blend in batches in a food processor with the single cream, Stilton and seasonings to a coarse consistency. Top with strips of cooked leek and serve with warm crusty granary bread.

Leek and chicken noodles

Serves 2
Ingredients
- 250g egg noodles
- 1 spray of oil
- 2 skinless chicken breasts, diced (or 250g peeled prawns)
- 1 leek, finely sliced
- 5cm piece of root ginger, peeled and grated
- 1tbsp medium curry paste
- 125g frozen peas
- soy sauce to serve

Method
1. Break the noodles into a large bowl. Pour over enough boiling water to cover. Stir and toss the noodles in the water and then leave on one side for 6–8 minutes.
2. Meanwhile, heat a wok and spray with oil. Add the chicken pieces or prawns and allow to cook through (about 10 minutes for the chicken and 5 minutes for the prawns). Remove from the wok and set aside on a plate. Stir-fry the leek and ginger until softened. Stir in the curry paste and cook for a further 2 minutes. Stir in the peas and chicken or prawns. Reduce the heat, cover and cook for 3 minutes.
3. Drain the noodles and add to the wok, toss well to coat. Serve with a splash of soy sauce.

Recipes courtesy of www.british-leeks.co.uk
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