



## Thunder Bay Breast Cancer Support Group



Newsletter May 2018 Issue 225

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Thunder Bay  
Breast Cancer  
Survivors Forum



### TBBCSG: Remembering who we are

We are men and women who differ in background, age, and stages of breast cancer. Some of us are newly diagnosed, others are in treatment, and still others are long-term survivors. The unspoken bond uniting us is the knowledge that there is life after a diagnosis of breast cancer, and that we share a new appreciation of being alive.

As a proactive, non-medically aligned, survivor-directed, self-help group we are ready to share information and provide emotional support. We network with support groups across the province, the country... the world.

We are about being there for one another because we know the shock of diagnosis, the roller coaster of emotion, and the physical changes you may experience. We share current information about breast health issues and learn from each others' experiences.

You'll find hope, acceptance, and understanding because we've all been there. Come join us to talk or listen, and perhaps find renewed strength in our confidential setting. You may be uplifted by a poem or story. Inspiration is a gift that we have for each other, and we all benefit as we join together in mutual support. You'll discover

fun as we share our feelings at monthly meetings, groan about aching muscles in our weekly exercise class, and enjoy potluck suppers and informal conversations.

Laugh with us at the true stories of wigs and scarves that can be a great fashion accent but sometimes have lives of their own. Chuckle at the funny jokes and stories that breast cancer survivors share. There's nothing better than a good laugh.

### Next Meeting

May 9<sup>th</sup>

7:00 pm at

St. Michael's Church  
on Red River Road

## Recruitment Drive - We Need You!

As many of you are aware, one of our Steering Committee member has taken a leave of absence. The Steering Committee is seeking new members to be a part of the Committee. The Steering Committee meets once a month for a one hour meeting. The meetings provide YOU, the Thunder Bay Breast Cancer Support Group with support, guest speakers and organize social functions. If you think you would like to become a Steering Committee member, please talk with any member of the Steering Committee (Gail, Michelle, Christine or Cindy). If you are interested please let us know by emailing [bcsg@tbaytel.net](mailto:bcsg@tbaytel.net). We look forward to your support!



## Tips for managing fatigue

### Source

Cancer related fatigue is so much more than just feeling tired from a long, hard day. Your cancer treatment can cause you to experience what feels like full body exhaustion. You're so exhausted that you can't get out of bed and no amount of rest will give you back your energy.

This is more common than you think. According to Cancer Research UK, 7-8 out of every 10 people with cancer suffer from fatigue. It's so common because nearly all of your treatments can cause it. You can often feel fatigued after the first few days of your chemo infusion and your radiation will gradually cause the fatigue to worsen leaving lasting effects. Other side effects of treatment also cause fatigue, like anemia. We know cancer treatment causes fatigue but we don't know why or how. This means that completely eliminating fatigue is difficult. But there are ways to help you manage and improve your energy levels.

**Exercise.** While it sounds disadvantageous, exercise can actually help to improve and increase your energy. It's important to start small, even if you were physically active before your cancer. Walking – even on days where all you can manage is to the end of your driveway, is enough help you both mentally and physically. Once your energy improves, gradually increase the amount of exercise you are doing. Find an exercise partner to help motivate you on the days where you really don't want to get out of bed. If you've had surgery or suffer from weak or brittle bones because of your cancer, talk to your doctor first to see what kind of exercises are safe for you.

**Nutrition.** There are tons of energy boosting foods that can help relieve your symptoms of fatigue. From protein-rich foods like fish, chicken and eggs to fiber-rich foods like whole grains, legumes and lentils a healthy diet can significantly improve your energy levels. The difficulty many people have when suffering from fatigue is that you don't have the energy to go out, buy these foods and prepare them. It can seem utterly daunting. There are ways to get the nutrients you need for those days when your energy

is at an all-time low. By eating small, frequent meals or snacks you are able to intake food without much effort. Eating fiber-rich cereals or snacking on nuts requires little to no preparation. Buying canned beans or lentils gives you a protein boost that also does not require a lot of preparation. (But be careful to eat canned goods in moderation as they can be high in sodium.) Once your energy levels start improving, you'll be able to be more involved in meal prep and maintaining better energy levels.

**Treat your other side effects.** Fatigue can be caused by other treatment side effects so tackling these might improve your energy. Anemia, a low red blood cell count, can leave you feeling exhausted. Changes in your diet, particularly increasing your iron intake, can easily treat anemia. Adding foods to your diet that are rich in iron or taking an iron supplement can help dramatically but speak with your doctor before taking any new medicines or supplements.

**Depression** can often be confused as fatigue because the symptoms are similar. Seeking a counsellor or speaking about your feelings of depression to your loved ones can improve your wellbeing far

beyond your exhaustion. Read our blog post on Anxiety and Depression for more information on improving your wellbeing.

Experiencing significant pain caused by your treatment can also hinder your mobility and increase your exhaustion. Coping with your pain while doing everyday activities can take a lot out of a person. Read our blog posts on joint pain and neuropathy to find ways of relieving your pain and talk with your doctor.

Energy conservation. Have you ever heard of The Spoon Theory? It's the concept that a person who is living with

a chronic illness only has so much energy to give during a day. The author, Christine, explains that when she wakes up in the morning she only has a certain amount of "spoons" (spoons = energy). Simply getting out of bed or brushing your teeth will use up your "spoons", leaving you depleted of energy to do anything else important that day. Planning ahead, scheduling rest and remembering to pace yourself can help preserve your energy for the things that you want or need to do that day.

Here are some other everyday tips that can help you increase your energy and improve your

quality of life:

Avoid drinking caffeine before bed.

Take short naps during the day, and try to sleep for a full 7 to 8 hours at night.

Drink lots of water.

Do your exercises at home instead of at a gym.

Notice the times of the day when you have the most energy, and schedule activities during those times.

Check with your doctor to make sure you don't have an infection.

Have your cancer treatments at the end of the day so you can go home to bed directly afterwards.

## The Metastatic Breast Cancer Series: Guide for the Newly Diagnosed

### Source

CBCN is excited to announce the launch of The Metastatic Breast Cancer Series: Guide for the Newly Diagnosed in partnership with Living Beyond Breast Cancer and the Metastatic Breast Cancer Network. This handbook has been adapted for Canadians in both English and French and will give you the information and support needed to make informed decisions about treatment and to manage the emotional impact of a metastatic diagnosis.

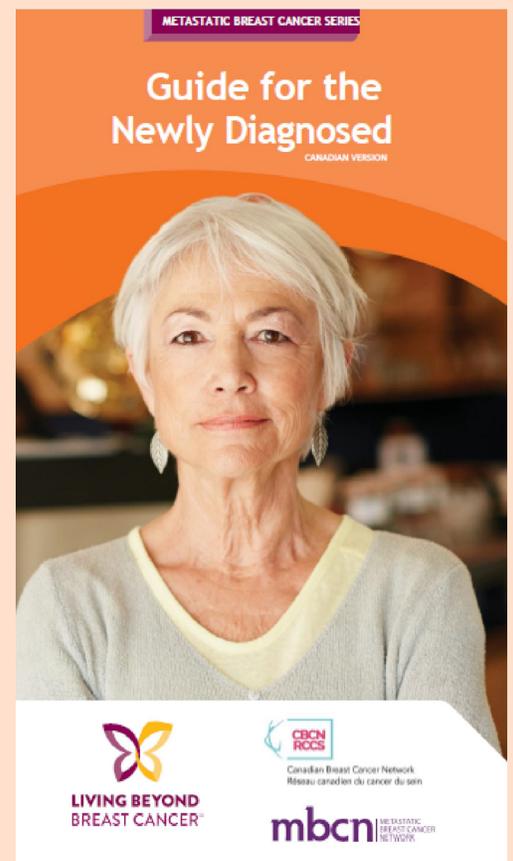
Whether this is your first breast cancer diagnosis or you've had breast cancer before, this guide offers a deeper look at how metastatic breast cancer

affects your daily life and ways to help manage the changes that it brings.

This guide explains stage IV breast cancer, existing and upcoming treatment options and their side effects, clinical trials, and complementary therapies to relieve stress and anxiety. Learn how to talk effectively about your concerns with your healthcare providers and with the people closest to you. Understand your diagnosis to play an active role in your treatment.

Digital copies of the guide are available [HERE](#) or contact [cbcn@cbcn.ca](mailto:cbcn@cbcn.ca) to order complimentary copies of this handbook.

Bulk orders are available for cancer centres, community organizations and support groups.





## A Running Thread

By Mary Gauvreau

### Source

It's good to set challenging goals.

I ran my first marathon the year I turned 50, and completed another two years later. I loved establishing training goals that would force me to push myself physically, and feeling healthy and strong as the result of running regularly. In November 2015, I decided on a new goal: to run another marathon in the fall of 2016, and complete it with a time fast enough to qualify for the Boston Marathon.

November 2015 also meant a screening mammogram for me. Unlike previous years, the test was followed by a second mammogram and a breast biopsy. On Christmas Eve 2015, I received my diagnosis of breast cancer over the phone in a call from my nurse practitioner.

That Christmas was difficult for me. The diagnosis left me feeling sad and angry and afraid. Because of the holiday, I waited almost three weeks before meeting with my surgeon, not knowing how

serious the cancer was, and what the treatment plan would be. I dealt with this period of uncertainty by focussing on being active outdoors with family, spending time with my husband and two young adult daughters cross-country skiing.

I felt reassured once I finally met with the surgeon. His explanations were clear, and he answered all of my questions. A lumpectomy and sentinel node dissection was scheduled for February, and would likely be followed by radiation. It appeared that things would get back to normal quickly.

That surgery found cancer in my lymph nodes, and the margins from the lumpectomy were not clear. My cancer was Stage II ductal and lobular carcinoma that was hormone receptor positive.

My treatment plan now changed. I would have eight rounds of chemotherapy once every two weeks from April to July 2016, followed by a mastectomy in August and radiation in October and November.

The new treatment plan was a big switch, and was going to affect my life more than I originally thought. My goal of running a fall marathon and qualifying for the Boston marathon was displaced, so I adopted a new goal: to get through treatment, regain strength and fitness, and then run another marathon.

The first hurdle to get through

was the chemotherapy. I wanted to stay as active as I could during treatment, and I was convinced that spending time outdoors would be good for me mentally. I set the goal to get outside and walk every day. Many days I was able to run or swim, but even on bad days I got out for a short walk with a friend. I also found it helpful to focus on "the big picture", how chemotherapy treatment would lead to a big long-term payoff in terms of health. My mantra became "Get through this, and run another marathon."

Over the next few months, through chemotherapy and mastectomy surgery, I continued to exercise, but by the start of radiation in October 2016 the cumulative fatigue associated with cancer treatment was taking its toll. It was getting harder and harder to get myself out the door to stay active. I remained convinced of the benefits of exercise, but I found that I needed help to stay motivated. Unable to train with my regular running group, I joined Start Smart, a run/walk group for beginner runners through the Ottawa Running Club. That way, I had to get up in the morning, put on my running shoes, and meet the group, even if I wasn't feeling well. Having an outside motivator became very important for me at this point. No matter how bad things were, I knew that I needed to go outside and exercise if I was going to keep my energy up and stay positive.

The end of treatment was the

most difficult stage in my cancer journey. I had hoped that when I completed my final radiation session in November 2016 that everything would quickly return to normal, but I was exhausted and experiencing cancer-related brain fog. After a few more months, not only was I fatigued, but my spirits were low. I felt frustrated, as I had not realised that I would have to fight so hard and long to get back to where I was before in terms of energy and cognitive level.

Once again, I turned to exercise to help combat the still present side effects of cancer treatment. My marathon goal seemed way out of reach, so I set smaller running goals, found new running partners, and registered for some shorter races to keep my motivation level high.

I credit exercise with helping to alleviate the fatigue, brain fog and depression that I experienced, but it was not the only factor. I also sought assistance from some local resources. An excellent source of support was the Cancer Coaching at the Maplesoft Centre. This free service turned out to be one of the best things that I did. My cancer coach

helped me find the resources that I needed, troubleshoot problems, and make decisions. Group coaching sessions also helped deal with the end of treatment and my return to work. Another helpful resource was a six-week support group at the Ottawa Integrative Cancer Centre. I found it reassuring to hear from other women who shared my experiences with breast cancer.

Over time, I was able to run longer and longer distances. At the end of March 2017, I ran a 5 km race. In April, I tackled the 10 km distance. In May, I ran a half marathon, and in October 2017 I achieved my goal of completing another full marathon.

I continue to place exercise as a priority in my life. This fall I added two weekly strength and fitness classes through Breast Cancer Action to my routine of running and swimming, and I have already registered for two running races in 2018. I'm still not running as fast as I did before my breast cancer diagnosis, but that just means that I have something to work towards. Whether or not I eventually qualify for the Boston Marathon, being fit, healthy and strong will always be a goal for me.

## Cilantro Lime Grilled Salmon

### Source

YIELDS: 4  
PREP TIME: 0:05  
TOTAL TIME: 0:25

### Ingredients

- 4 (6-oz.) salmon fillets
- kosher salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 4 tbsp. butter
- 1/2 c. lime juice
- 1/4 c. honey
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 tbsp. Chopped cilantro

### Directions

Season salmon with salt and pepper. Heat grill and place salmon on grill flesh side down. Cook for 8 minutes then flip and cook on other side until salmon is cooked through, 6 minutes more. Let rest 5 minutes.

Meanwhile make sauce: In a medium saucepan over medium heat, add butter, lime juice, honey, and garlic. Stir until butter is melted and all ingredients are combined. Turn off heat and add cilantro.

Pour sauce over salmon and serve.

## Butterfly Story Fund

The Butterfly Story fund is now accepting applications! Looking for ways to thrive as a survivor but need a little financial help? The Butterfly Story is here for you! Want to attend the Luncheon of Hope, We-Did exercise classes or another great event? Fill out an application and it will be considered for funding. It can be challenging to ask for help sometimes, but please know the applications are kept in the strictest confidence! If interested, please check out the application form [here](#) OR email [thebutterflystory@hotmail.com](mailto:thebutterflystory@hotmail.com) OR contact Michelle or Shannon to discuss privately.

## Upcoming

### Thunder Bay Breast Cancer Support Group Meeting

May 9th, 7PM,  
St. Michael's Church

Know of any upcoming events related to our community?

**Let us know!**

475-0025 (Voice Mail)  
or

[bcsg@tbaytel.net](mailto:bcsg@tbaytel.net)

### Sharing the Journey

Along your journey you have found support and encouragement from our support group. If you have two hours to spare a month, we encourage you to consider becoming a Steering Committee Member. The wisdom gained from your experience can help us strengthen the group and will help to ensure the continued success of the Breast Cancer Support Group. Call a Steering Committee Member at 475-0025 to learn how you can take part or email [bcsg@tbaytel.net](mailto:bcsg@tbaytel.net).



### Network News

Don't forget to check out the Spring 2017 edition of Outreach News brought to you by the Canadian Breast Cancer Network.

[Click here to check it out!](#)



**Next Meeting**  
MAY 9th 7:00 pm at  
St. Michael's Church  
on Red River Road

## For Support and Encouragement



As fellow support group members, we would be happy to hear from you.

(807) 475-0025 (Voice Mail)  
[bcsg@tbaytel.net](mailto:bcsg@tbaytel.net)  
[breastcancersupporttb.com](http://breastcancersupporttb.com)



Canadian Breast Cancer Network  
Réseau canadien du cancer du sein

[www.cbcn.ca](http://www.cbcn.ca)



Supportive Care  
(807) 684-7310  
Toll Free  
(877) 696-7223  
No Referral Needed



Thunder Bay Regional  
Health Sciences  
Foundation

The Thunder Bay Breast Cancer Support Group gratefully acknowledges the funding support of the Northern Cancer Fund of the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Foundation. All gifts made to the Foundation stay in Northwestern Ontario to benefit its residents.

[healthsciencesfoundation.ca](http://healthsciencesfoundation.ca)



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