

December 17, 2008- The day, at the age of 38, I was told that I had breast cancer and my life was changed forever. Surprisingly my cancer diagnosis, although terrifying in the beginning, has actually made me stronger and happier in a lot of ways. My diagnosis was a result of my normal, yearly mammogram. Due to my strong family history of breast cancer, I had my baseline mammogram at 30 and then yearly thereafter. I always knew my risk was higher than most. My mom is a two time survivor and both my maternal and paternal grandmothers had it. Thankfully, all have done well. There is still nothing like hearing those words directed at you. I was so glad that my husband was with me since I really don't remember much else of what was said...it was all blah, blah, blah, cancer, blah, surgery, chemo, blah...

From that very first day, my friends, family, and even people I would consider acquaintances, were there for my family and me and their support has never wavered. The calls, emails, cards, visits, baskets, brownies, dinners and hugs have been a true blessing and have very much sustained me through the last nine months. My diagnosis was good in terms of prognosis; stage 1, ER positive, no node involvement, and Her2 negative. January and February were consumed with two surgeries; the first being a partial mastectomy and the second one to get clear margins. March was focused on testing, both genetic and Oncotype DX. BRAC1 genetic testing came back negative and my Oncotype DX came back in an intermediate range, showing that I would benefit from chemotherapy and Tamoxifen. As scary as the thought of chemo was to me, it was wonderful to be able to make that decision based on a scientific bases rather than just a gut feel. This is what the Oncotype DX affords women. I started chemo in April. My 1<sup>st</sup> round was with Taxotere and Cytosan. I had a bad reaction my 2<sup>nd</sup> round, so I had a one week break, and then for my 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> rounds I had Abraxane and Cytosan.

Ok, so chemo wasn't fun, losing your hair just really bites, BUT there is something strangely empowering about the whole process. I took a long look at my extremely happy and satisfying life. I thought what it would be like for my family without me in it, and then I moved on! I happily took the chemo knowing that it was helping me. I fought through to get to where I am today. Trust me, your hair does grow back!!! It's a temporary bummer and I actually took the opportunity to do something pretty drastic. I became a brunette! I was always blonde so I thought, "if I'm going to go thru this, I'm going to have fun with it." One of the best days was when my husband and I went wig shopping!

I have one more week of radiation and then I start my Tamoxifen. I look forward to celebrating New Years 2010 and my 40<sup>th</sup> birthday in March. IT'S ALL GOOD!

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