



PATHWAYS

A Study of Breast Cancer Survivorship

A NEWSLETTER FOR STUDY PARTICIPANTS

FALL 2021

Heart Health after Breast Cancer

Women who have had breast cancer are living much longer than before. By the time we reach eight years after a breast cancer diagnosis, we are more likely to die from heart disease than breast cancer. Breast cancer treatment can increase the risk of some kinds of heart and artery diseases, also known as cardiovascular disease (CVD). Now, a new study has found that having a cardiovascular event, like a heart attack or stroke, may in turn make breast cancer grow faster. (Koelwyn et al. Nature Medicine 2020 Sep;26(9):1452-1458).

Heart and artery diseases, and breast cancer share many risk factors, so the same things can help us to reduce our risk for both. One of our Community Advisory Board members spoke with Ellen (name changed to protect privacy) about her experience of CVD after breast cancer treatment. Ellen finished her breast cancer treatment in 2015 and two years later, she was so tired and out of breath, that it was hard to walk.



Ellen's family has a history of high blood pressure but, other than her grandfather (who lived to his 90s), not of heart disease. Some healthy habits can keep your heart strong, reduce your risk of a breast cancer recurrence, and help your heart heal if you have a heart condition:

- Eating healthy
- Exercising often
- Not smoking or vaping tobacco
- Managing stress
- Maintaining a healthy weight

You can learn about common heart conditions on the Health and Wellness section of the KP website, search the Kaiser Permanente encyclopedia or the American Heart Association webpage (www.heart.org).

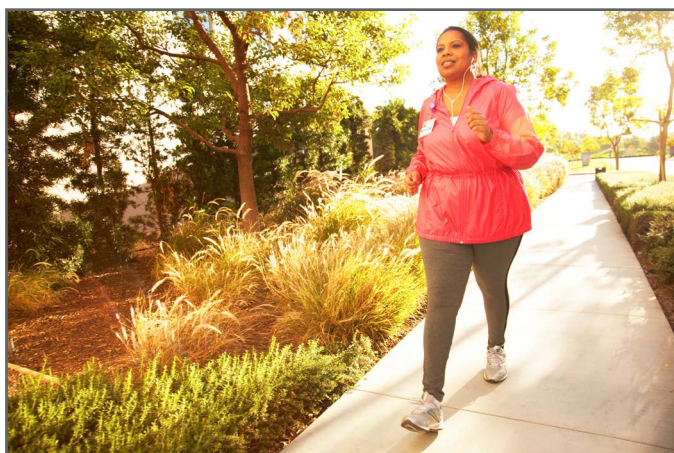
Sometimes during breast cancer treatment or with other health problems, we may not be able to exercise. On days that we have some energy, even small amounts of physical activity can help. Movement is good for heart health and for reducing our risk of another cancer. For those of us who have not been active recently, cancer exercise experts say we should “start low and go slow”; that is, begin with shorter amounts of easier movement, like walking and light weights, and build up gradually. KP breast cancer survivors who got 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity per week had fewer CVD events (23% less) than those who were not active. (Jones et al. Journal of Clinical Oncology 2016)



Reducing the risk of Heart Disease

Like breast cancer, our risk of heart disease may be partly related to our genes, which we get from our parents and that we cannot control. Getting older also increases our risk of both.

Heart Health After Breast Cancer *continued*



The Pathways Winter 2021 newsletter has advice on being active and managing stress. Avoiding tobacco is also good for our health. Eating healthy is also important. A diet of whole grains, vegetables and fruits; low in fats and sugars; and avoiding red meat can lower both CVD and breast cancer risk. Maintaining a healthy weight is also good. However, not eating and losing weight can be signs of a problem, as they were for Ellen.

Breast Cancer Treatment and CVD

Chemotherapy, radiation, and medicines may impact your heart. Ellen had a minor problem with her heart a few years before being diagnosed with breast cancer. And she was told that CVD might be a possible effect of her cancer treatment.

Ellen was walking ten miles a day to prepare for a trip. She told us, “It seemed that my symptoms came on suddenly. I felt cold symptoms, congested ... just walking started to become difficult, I had to stop because I was out of breath.” She couldn’t eat and had swelling from excess fluids (also called edema) in her ankles and abdomen. She lost 30 pounds.

Our Pathways researchers, Dr. Heather Greenlee of the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center and Dr. Marilyn Kwan at Kaiser Permanente Northern California’s Division of Research, have been leading a study of CVD in women who have had breast cancer compared to those who have not. They found different treatments increase the risk of some heart and artery problems:

- Women who received chemotherapy are more likely to develop problems with the heart’s pumping (heart failure, which doesn’t mean the heart stops), diseases of the heart muscle (cardiomyopathy), or a blood clot that starts in a vein (venous thromboembolism).
- Women who received left-sided radiation were more likely to develop problems with the heart’s pumping (heart failure), or a blood clot that starts in a vein (venous thromboembolism).
- Women who received hormonal therapy were more likely to have their heart stop pumping (cardiac arrest) or develop a blood clot that starts in a vein (venous thromboembolism).



Women with breast cancer were more likely to develop high blood pressure and diabetes compared with those who were not diagnosed with breast cancer. Also, those who already had high blood pressure or diabetes when diagnosed had twice the risk of heart problems after breast cancer.

Ellen was first told she had pneumonia, then that she had congestive heart failure—her heart wasn’t pumping right. Her primary care provider made the connection right away to her cancer treatments (chemotherapy, radiation, or both).

Dr. Kwan is exploring how another chemotherapy drug can damage the heart. A common chemotherapy drug, doxorubicin (Adriamycin®) is known to increase the likelihood of heart problems. It can cause changes in heart rhythm (arrhythmias) or reduce the pumping action (heart failure). Another drug, Herceptin® (trastuzumab) is used to treat HER2-

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positive breast cancers (about 1 in every 4 breast cancers). It can cause heart muscle damage and heart failure. These problems usually go away when women stop taking Herceptin®.



Ellen does not regret her breast cancer treatment. She was glad her doctor recognized the problem, started with her cancer treatment and that the specialist tried a pacemaker to help her heart pump correctly. After it was implanted, the change was immediate. She said that it “made a world of difference and gave me a second chance.” Ellen was very grateful to be in a cardiac rehabilitation program with other women that had heart problems because of cancer treatments. “My women’s support group was the most helpful,” she told us, learning together how to be heart healthy, including getting exercise and managing stress. She is back to walking every day, more than 3 miles, which is also good for her dog. Ellen suggested “Learn as much as you can about your condition; do not be afraid to ask questions.”

Pathways researchers are working with our study data to come up with a way to predict who is likely to have heart problems from their breast cancer treatment. In addition to treatment and past health issues, they are looking at race, ethnicity, and other factors.



Our risk of heart problems and of breast cancer can also be affected by other things, like air pollution from traffic and smoke, where we live, work and play. Pathways’ investigators Drs. Salma Shariff-Marco and Scarlett Lin Gomez of the University of California, San Francisco have been building on the Heart Study to look at how our social and built environments impact CVD risk after breast cancer. Stay tuned for more news from Pathways about heart health after breast cancer. ☒

KAISER RESOURCES FOR YOUR HEART AND YOUR HEALTH

If you have concerns about your heart health, talk to your primary care doctor or nurse practitioner.

KP can help reduce CVD risk with Preventing Heart Attacks and Strokes Everyday (PHASE) and other programs. If you are a KP member and want support in reaching your overall health goals, check out Kaiser Permanente’s free Healthy Lifestyle Program. Based on your answers to an online Health Assessment, you will get a personal, online program with advice and tools to help you lead a healthier life. It can help with areas such as:

- Eating healthy
- Losing weight
- Moving more
- Sleeping better
- Reducing stress
- Quitting smoking/vaping

This is free, personalized advice, encouragement, and support for KP members. You will be able to track your progress and as you advance through your goals you will be able to set new goals and join additional programs.

Kaiser Permanente members also have access to great offers on workout gear and fitness classes. Please contact member health services at 1-800-464-4000 to verify if you qualify for these offers. If you would prefer to speak with someone in Spanish or a Chinese dialect, you can call 1-800-757-7585.

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1. Choose Healthy Program

Kaiser Permanente members can get reduced rates on a variety of fitness, health, and wellness products, such as:

- Activity trackers — Save on activity trackers from brands such as Fitbit, Garmin, and more.
- Workout apparel — Save on clothing and accessories from brands like Skechers, 2XU, PRO Compression, and more.
- Exercise equipment — Save on equipment from brands such as TRX, Gaiam, BOSU, and more.

2. Active&Fit Direct

With the ChooseHealthy® program*, you also have access to contracted fitness centers in the Active&Fit Direct network. Participating gyms may include Gold's Gym, Curves, Anytime Fitness, and more.



3. ClassPass

ClassPass partners with 30,000 gyms and studios around the world, offering a range of classes including yoga, dance, cardio, boxing, Pilates, boot camp, and more.

With this ClassPass offer, Kaiser Permanente eligible members can get:

- Unlimited on-demand video workouts at no cost
- Reduced rates on livestream and in-person fitness classes

ChooseHealthy, Active&Fit Direct and ClassPass are not available to California Medi-Cal members. ❌

THRIVE LOCAL CONNECTIONS

Staying healthy is not a result of high-quality medical care alone. A person's total health depends on important social factors, such as access to basic nutrition, a safe place to live, economic opportunities, and reliable transportation.



Many of our members are struggling with needs they never anticipated — safe housing and food, utilities, and transportation costs, and even meeting the cost of their medical care.

In response, Kaiser Permanente launched Thrive Local Connections (TLC), a national member call center that aims to connect members to social services to help them stay healthy.

Continued on page 5

TLC is not intended to replace any existing programs within the KP care delivery system, but rather to add a new resource for members coping with unforeseen pandemic-related needs.

The service is free to KP members, please call **1-800-443-6328** to access this service. ☒

PATHWAYS UPDATE

We are excited to share with you that we have received funding from the National Institutes of Health to continue the Pathways Study for another 5 years, through May 2026.

We are on our 4th funding cycle and this has only been possible because of your dedicated participation in the study. Every survey question you answer goes to the data we analyze. **THANK YOU** for your continued participation!

To be able to continue receiving all this valuable information from you, we will keep contacting you to complete the yearly follow-up surveys.



Those of you who have completed the 96-month follow-up questionnaire are being contacted on a yearly basis to complete the annual follow-up surveys. These questionnaires take on average about 15 minutes to complete.

During the pandemic we have included a COVID-19 related questionnaire to help us assess how our study participants are being impacted

during this difficult time. It takes about 10 minutes to complete this portion of the survey.



We try to accommodate everyone's schedule; we hope you can work with us to find a little time to complete these surveys. It is critical to have as many participants as possible complete each survey to learn more about the different aspects of breast cancer.

If you missed our call and would like to complete your survey, you can reach us at our toll-free number **1-866-206-2979** or email us: **DOR-pathways@kp.org** ☒

UPCOMING NEWSLETTER

Do you have an idea or a story to share about how your cancer or treatment caused a problem that continued at least 2 years later? Please send a summary via email to **DOR-pathways@kp.org** and we may contact you for an interview in the future. Thank you! ☒

For the most up to date information on the Pathways study, please visit our website:
<http://pathways.kaiser.org> ☒

New Contact Information?

To keep in touch with you we must have your latest contact information. Please let us know if your phone number or home address has changed. You can reach us by calling our toll-free number: **1-866-206-2979** or email us: **DOR-pathways@kp.org** ☒



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