

Because young women with breast cancer have different needs and problems.

Stephanie's story:

When I was diagnosed three and half years ago at the age of 29 with metastatic breast cancer, I felt pretty overwhelmed and alone. My husband and I had just bought a house and were trying to have our first child. Instead of a baby, I was blessed with a very rude tumor that pretty much came out of nowhere and literally grew daily before my eyes until I was able to have the surgery to remove it. It turned out to be a highly aggressive breast cancer and had already spread to both lungs with innumerable mets by the time I had undergone surgery for the primary tumor and started my chemotherapy. Since then, I have had numerous chemotherapy protocols, radiation, two experimental clinical trials involving immunotherapy, high-dose chemo, a stem cell transplant, and most recently, radiofrequency ablation for lung metastasis. It has been a long road, but I'm still kicking and doing well. I am so grateful to the Young Women's Breast Cancer program for the yearly symposium, various group activities and information and support they provide AND for introducing me to other women in the same situation.



**Stephanie Carson
and Natalie Trottier**
Survivors

Upon my original diagnosis, I turned to another support group, but found myself put into a group with people twice my age who were in completely different situations. They couldn't relate to the losses experienced by someone younger—the loss of never being able to be a mom, the disruption of my life and career, and just the profound sense of alienation from others in my age group. I quickly dropped out. Later, a social worker at my cancer center told me about the Young Women's Breast Cancer Program. Through the YWBCP, I have been able to connect with other women who can really relate to what it's like to go through this at a younger age. The situation is horrible no matter what age it's encountered, but for the young subpopulation, it's simply a different experience and disease. I hope eventually they separate the research to determine the differences in the disease itself when it attacks younger women. I know in the media we hear about breast cancer all the time. Everyone's probably sick to death of it and assumes there's enough funding for it. I just hope it is understood that almost everything out there addresses the typical post-menopausal breast cancer patient and not the younger subpopulation. So, I truly hope we will stop being overlooked, as this disease is simply a different animal for our group. It would be wonderful if other women could have access to this program like we do in the St. Louis area.

Stephanie Carson

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