

BREAST CANCER GUIDE

A Treatment and Facilities Guide for Patients and Their Families



Take Control



- CANCER EDUCATION • CANCER SUPPORT AND ADVOCACY GROUPS
- TREATMENT OPTIONS CHART • CREDIBLE CANCER RESOURCES
- REVIEWED BY A DISTINGUISHED MEDICAL ADVISORY BOARD

◀ *Interview with cancer survivor Olivia Newton-John*

Beloved Superstar Thrives 18 Years After Cancer Diagnosis

As an internationally acclaimed recording artist and actor, Olivia Newton-John's career has spanned four decades of award-winning music and film. She's "Sandy" in *"Grease"* — the most successful movie musical in history, a superstar singer who has sold more than 50 million albums, and has a long list of worldwide hits that include *"I Honestly Love You"*, *"Magic"* and *"Physical."*

With all of her success, Olivia could have chosen any number of directions to take her life and her career, but a diagnosis of breast cancer in July 1992, at the age of 44, forever altered her path. "I see having cancer as a gift now — not one I want to get again, thank you very much! But I am grateful for the experience, because if I hadn't had it, I wouldn't have been able to do all the things I'm doing now. It changed my life in a radical way — not immediately, but over time," she said.

Cancer free since 1993, Olivia has tirelessly committed her time and considerable talent to heralding the importance of early detection and improving women's health. She credits her regular breast self-screening for helping to save her life, and later she began to promote a women's health device, the Liv Aid, designed to augment the sense of touch when doing a breast self-examination.

"The Liv Aid was brought to my attention a number of years ago. It impressed me because it was a wonderful way to encourage women to do regular breast exams with something that is so simple. I don't want any women to have to go through what I've gone through. Unfortunately every day more and more women are discovering they have breast cancer. If they find it early, however, the success rate is much higher, and the chances for a full recovery are better."

Olivia's passion to help women stems at least in part from her own cancer story, which began in 1992. Having a history of benign lumps in her own breasts, she regularly conducted breast self-exams. That summer, however, she found a lump that didn't seem right to her, so her doctor sent her for a mammogram and performed a needle biopsy. The results of both tests came back negative.

"I still felt something was wrong, and so did my doctor, so he sent me for a surgical biopsy. The timing of all this was incredulous because my dad had cancer and I went to Australia to see him, but I didn't tell him about my tests. I came back (to the U.S.) and my father died that weekend — then I got my results. Everything happened at once," she said.

The surgical biopsy returned positive for breast cancer. Olivia made the decision with her oncologist and her surgeon to have a modified radical mastectomy and reconstruction at the same time. Nine months of chemotherapy followed her surgery. Olivia supplemented her traditional treatment plan with a number of alternate therapies including meditation, visualization, acupuncture, yoga and herbs. She said she mixed the best of western and eastern treatment options.

"I felt comfortable with my oncologist and surgeon and we decided on a course of action, but it's very personal. Every person has to make their own decision," Olivia said. "I don't give others advice regarding treatment, but I do think your mind and spirit are as important as the treatment you select. You need to focus on the positive and see that you are going to get well; the thoughts you think are really important."

In the 17 years since her cancer treatment, Olivia refers to herself as a "thrifer" rather than a survivor, and credits a balanced personal regimen for her good health. Along with sensible, healthy eating and daily



exercise, she and her husband, John Easterling, founder of Amazon Herb Company, have what they refer to as daily "herbage," and she said she's never been healthier.

As Olivia integrated her philosophy of including body, mind and spirit in her healing process, it became a way of life. When asked in 2003 to assist in raising funds to build a cancer treatment center in her former hometown of Melbourne, Australia, she agreed. She also helped design the wellness center that will offer patients the alternative therapies she used during her own treatment.

With a whole hearted commitment to what has become the Olivia Newton-John Cancer Centre and Wellness Centre (ONJCWC), Olivia set an ambitious fundraising goal, and after three years of planning, in 2008 she led a group of friends on a 142-mile walk on the Great Wall of China. They raised more than \$2 million. "It was an amazing experience. People flew in from all over the world to walk with us — famous athletes, cancer survivors and people in treatment. I was the leader so even when I got sick in the middle, I kept going. It was like a cancer journey, that no matter what happens, you don't give up."

Olivia received some encouragement of her own in an encounter that took place shortly after she was diagnosed. "A woman approached me and said she had read about my story in the paper. She told me that she had cancer 20 years before and she was fine. That was a big moment for me. I encourage other women with that same thought — I had breast cancer 18 years ago and I'm here. That's the best torch I can pass along."

For more information visit www.OliviaNewton-John.com.