

## real life

'When my breast cancer came back, I was told I had six months to live...  
that was 12 years ago'



**Dr Ann Fingret, 78, is married to Peter.**

**They have four grown-up children.**

The first lump I found in my breast was treated with a lumpectomy and

radiotherapy. I was 53. Unfortunately, eight years later, I developed another type of breast cancer, in the same breast. I had a mastectomy and chemotherapy, followed by a breast reconstruction. I was absolutely fine for five years, but then suddenly I developed symptoms of breathlessness, which got rapidly worse. The cancer had spread to my lungs, and the surgeon said to me, "I'll give you six months to two years." That was my worst moment.

Hearing breast cancer has come back is a shock, but there is a full life to be lived after diagnosis. I've had all sorts of treatments, ranging from different drugs to chemotherapy. Telling the family bad news for a third time is not good, but Peter and the kids know I've had a great life, so there are no regrets. And because I've gone on and on, they think I'll go on forever. You need good friends, who will go along this long, long road with you. But don't be critical if they are not always there – people are very varied in how much they can cope with the whole scene.

We've had a wonderful 12 years since I was diagnosed. I've seen the births of four of my seven grandchildren, been around the world, lived in a beach house, and had two fabulous 70th birthday parties in France, and I'm planning my 80th now!

When you've had a primary cancer, each time you get a symptom, you think, "Is this it again?" It's the same with a secondary. Few people write about secondary cancer. They think it's depressing – particularly for those who have a primary cancer where the 10-year survival rate is extremely high.

The truth is, only a tiny number of people get secondaries. But it's so important not to ignore your symptoms. Do bother your GP – and keep a note of symptoms you might be looking for. I do think the cancer will win in the end – but, frankly, it's going to have to try much harder!

# 7 tips for an optimal mammogram

A mammogram is a test women often skip, but it's an essential tool in detecting early breast cancer

**Many women see mammograms as an uncomfortable and unpleasant experience, but it's a notion you need to set aside, says Professor Justus Appfelstaedt, head of the Breast Clinic at Tygerberg Hospital. A mammogram is a vital test and has many benefits, most importantly that it changes the treatment of breast cancer from a dreaded disease to a manageable condition. When scheduling a mammogram, keep the following in mind:**

- 1 Use a facility that either specialises in mammography or performs many mammograms each day.
- 2 Ask your mammography centre whether they offer full field digital mammography, whether they are trained in mammography interpretation, and how many mammograms they do each day.
- 3 If you are satisfied that the facility you use provides high quality mammography, continue to go there on a regular basis so that your mammograms can be compared year to year.
- 4 If you change to a different facility, ask for your previous mammogram films to bring with you to the new facility so they may be compared to the new mammograms that will be taken.

**5** Bring as much data with you about your previous mammograms and breast health history, including dates and places of previous mammograms and other breast imaging, biopsies or treatments you may have had before.

**6** Don't wear deodorant, talcum powder, lotions or cream under your arms or on your breasts on the day of your mammogram, as they may interfere with the quality of the image.

**7** If you have sensitive breasts, try having your mammogram performed at times of the month when your breasts will be less tender. In general, the week after a period is when breasts should be least tender.

Marc Jacobs is donating R10 to the Breast Cancer division within CANSA, for every bottle of the new Daisy Limited Edition Hot Pink bottle sold. We have three bottles worth R1 045 each to give away. To enter, SMS MARC JACOBS with your name, address, e-mail and ID number to 45599, before 31 October 2011. Each SMS costs R1,50.



## WHAT IS SECONDARY BREAST CANCER?

- ✦ **When breast cancer cells spread to another part of the body – even though the tumour may be in the lungs or the bones, it's made from the same cells as the breast cancer.**
- ✦ **Secondary breast cancer is also called metastatic, stage 4 or advanced breast cancer. One or more areas of the body can be affected by this.**
- ✦ **Secondary breast cancer can't be cured, but it can be controlled, sometimes for many years, and the treatments are improving all the time. w&h**



For more information on breast cancer prevention, treatment, initiatives and events, click on [womanandhomemagazine.co.za](http://womanandhomemagazine.co.za)