

My name is Trisha and I have risky genes

Breast and Ovarian Cancer runs strong in my family; in my younger years I chose to ignore this but at the age of 25 I was forced to face its reality. My mother was diagnosed with breast cancer at the age of 45, which is when cancer became very real to me. At this time, she also completed genetic testing determining she was BRCA2 positive. She explained to me the risks and chances that this gene might be something I carry as well; I then decided to have the testing done myself.

By 26 it was determined I also carried the BRCA2 genetic mutation, again bringing me closer to this deadly disease. The next step for me was pre-screening. I proceeded to my first mammogram and received a referral to a plastic surgeon to get information on preventative surgery.



At my mammogram, already it looked like they had found something abnormal. I was then sent for a closer look through ultra sound. There was indeed something abnormal in my right breast. I was later sent for a biopsy and waited a few weeks for potentially life altering results. During this time, I had thought more about preventative surgery, thinking to myself if I was lucky enough to come back with a cancer free result it's a precaution I should take, this biopsy was enough to scare me into courage. The results came back non-cancerous!

The next stop for me was meeting with the plastic surgeon about preventative options. My thought was I wouldn't be able to have the surgery for some time due to waiting periods, this was time I was going to take to come to reality with my decision. To my surprise, after my consultation, I was advised I could start my journey in just three months. This immediately brought me to tears, was I ready?? Thinking about everything my mom had to go through I felt I had an opportunity to take control of the situation. I decided to move forward with the prevention.

My journey consisted of three surgeries. The first (June 9th, 2015), a "bilateral breast, delay of nipple areola complex". Basically they went into my breast and detached the internal breast tissue from the nipple, allowing my body to heal and develop blood flow to the nipple through the skin not the tissue. The second surgery took place June 29th, 2015 where they completed a "bilateral breast, mastectomy, immediate alloderm assisted breast reconstruction with insertion of tissue expanders". This is where they removed my breast tissue, and lifted the chest muscle to place expanders underneath. These expanders were then filled with fluid every couple of weeks by inserting a needle through the chest into the expander. At this point there was minimum feeling so it wasn't as bad as it sounds. Although stretching of the chest muscle was where the pain took place. After about six months of the expanders I was "medically ready" for my third and final procedure. January 11th, 2016 I proceeded with a "bilateral chest wall, removal of tissue expanders, insertion cohesive silicone gel implants". This is where they removed the tissue expanders and replaced them with implants.

It is recommended I have a hysterectomy between the ages 30-35. As I have not yet started my family this is something I have put on the back burner for now.

I am happy to have come out of these surgeries with no real complications and now don't have to worry about what threats my breasts could have brought to my life. I am happy to live in a country that gave me the opportunity to take a harmful situation into my own hands and make it better.

I am thankful for the support I received from family and close friends. I am thankful my mother was there to help me through the journey and we were able to relate on such a personal level. I am even more thankful I still have her with me today.



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