Katie Couric Shares Her Breast Cancer Diagnosis—and a Message for You

"You may fall into a category of women who need more than a mammogram," urges journalist Katie Couric about breast cancer screenings.

September 29, 2022 By Trent Straube

Journalist, author and cancer advocate Katie Couric was diagnosed with breast cancer in June. After a lumpectomy and radiation, which she started undergoing earlier this month, the former talk show host, who lost her first husband to colon cancer, is doing well. Couric shared her recent cancer journey in an essay on Katie Couric Media and via social media.



View this post on Instagram

A post shared by Katie Couric (@katiecouric)

"Every two minutes, a woman is diagnosed with breast cancer in the United States. On June 21st, I became one of them," she posted on Instagram. "As we approach

#BreastCancerAwarenessMonth, I wanted to share my personal story with you all and encourage you to get screened and understand that you may fall into a category of women who needs more than a mammogram."

The category she references is women who, like her, have dense breasts. Ever the advocate and educator, Couric explains the importance of this fact. "Forty-five percent of women in this country (yes, nearly half) have dense breasts, which can make it difficult for mammograms alone to detect abnormalities," she writes.

"Currently, 38 states require doctors to notify their patients if they have dense breasts. But often that information doesn't clearly convey the need to have a supplemental screening or this very important fact: The denser your breasts, the higher your risk of cancer. In 2019, the FDA [Food and Drug Administration] proposed federal legislation that would make the language and guidance more specific, but the agency has been dragging its feet. Let's get a move on, folks."

> Today, one of our #StandUpToCancer co-founders announced her breast cancer diagnosis. Thank you @KatieCouric for sharing your story & advocating cancer screening. With #BreastCancerAwarenessMonth coming up, check w/ your doctor about screening options. ????https://t.co/MMw5cOmvO6
>
> — Stand Up To Cancer (@SU2C) September 28, 2022

Couric titled her essay "Why NOT Me?" because of the fact that cancer runs in her family. Her sister, Emily, died of pancreatic cancer at age 54. Her mother was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin lymphoma, and her father had prostate cancer. Her current husband had a tumor "the size of a coconut" removed from his liver just months before their wedding.

"I had practically become an expert on colon and pancreatic cancers," shares Couric, who in 2000 had her colonoscopy broadcast on the Today show to raise awareness. "But no one in my family had ever had breast cancer. During that 24-hour whirlwind [after my diagnosis], I found out that 85 percent of the 264,000 American women who are diagnosed every year in this country have no family history. I clearly had a lot to learn."

Couric's breast cancer was discovered after she underwent a mammogram that was six months

overdue.

“Please get your annual mammogram,” she urges. “I was six months late this time. I shudder to think what might have happened if I had put it off longer. But just as importantly, please find out if you need additional screening.”

Couric promises to use her experience as a teachable moment. In addition to the useful information in her article, she promises that “during the month of October, we’ll be covering every aspect of breast cancer: the latest diagnostic tools, treatments, and prevention strategies as well as sharing first-person accounts. And of course, I’ll have more on what I’m learning as I navigate my own diagnosis.”

In related news, check out the current cover story of Cancer Health. We profile ob-gyn Kelly Shanahan, who after being diagnosed with metastatic breast cancer in 2013 redirected her passion and expertise toward advocacy.

And to learn more about this topic, click #Breast Cancer. You'll find a collection of Cancer Health articles such as:

- "Updated Breast Cancer Screening Guidelines for Women Over 40,"
- "Breast Cancer Cells Spread During Sleep,"
- "Researchers Find Less Risky Way to Monitor Breast Cancer Progression,"
- "Accuracy of Diagnostic Mammograms May Vary Across Racial and Ethnic Groups," and
- "What Is Radiation Therapy?"

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