

I am 24 years old and was diagnosed with breast cancer about 2 weeks ago. I grew up in Austin, but actually live in San Diego now for grad school (studying neuroscience). I am Austin now, staying with my parents, for surgeries and chemo (because my doctors encouraged me to be with my family for that part) but I am planning on returning to San Diego when that is done in Feb or so.

So far I don't have much of a story about my treatment yet. Just lots of tests. It is stage 2, and hasn't spread except to the lymph nodes under my arm. My treatment plan so far is to do surgery next week to put in the chemo port and take out the lymph nodes, and start chemo the following week. Chemo should shrink the tumor to teeny tiny so that I can get a lumpectomy that will look great. After that radiation and then all the hormones, and herceptin stuff.

I have no family history (or any BRCA mutations) so it seems like this was just bad luck. It has been shocking though, b/c I have always been in great health. I am a vegetarian and exercise 2 or 3 times a day (running, swimming, surfing, yoga, and have done several triathlons). I couldn't believe this could happen to me. I first felt the lump about a year and a half ago, right around my 23rd bday. As a graduate student and researcher I did some research online and figured out that it is normal for young women to occasionally get lumps but that they should be checked out if they persist, so I waited a month or so, and after it was still there I went to the student health center at my school. My doctor said it was nothing, and that I shouldn't worry about it, so I didn't (thankful to be told that I was fine). Six months later it was still there so I went back, and was told again not to worry. Finally a year later I went back and said I was really concerned, and the doctor agreed to send me for an ultrasound for "my peace of mind". Immediately from the ultrasound it was clear there was a problem, and they sent me for a mammogram that gave me BI-RADS category 5 rating.

It has been really frustrating since it would have been so easy to tell there was a problem had my doctor encouraged it, but instead I was discouraged from getting more testing, from worrying about it, and even from doing self exams. I am going to do chemo, but I still think I will be able to run (timed) for the race (my doctors think I will handle the treatments very well).

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