

Inspired Products and Services for the Breast Cancer Survivor

As a survivor, I know how difficult it is for most breast cancer patients to find products and services that could potentially make a huge difference in their level of comfort during and after chemo and radiation treatments. In keeping with the spirit of this book I've included the most current information possible on available products for you. I've discovered some amazing inventions designed to help you and me as breast cancer patients and survivors. Oral health enhancers like saliva stimulators, toothpaste and mouthwash with little or no alcohol in them; forward-thinking companies that make useful yet fashionable hospital gowns and yoga wear. I had no idea there were so many useful products out there, designed just for us.

Survivor Entrepreneurs

Every single one of us who goes through breast cancer face difficulties and challenges. Many of us want to "give back" in some way after our treatments are finished. The entrepreneurial survivors listed below were able to turn adversity into opportunity. As you'll discover, their efforts have resulted in a new vision, a new life and a new company. Here are women who were so challenged by the lack of services and comfort they encountered on their own medical journey that they invented solutions! These women, who saw a need and filled it, inspire me.

Let me introduce you to them:

Healing Threads

Three sisters who created Healing Threads are determined to show that a person affected by breast cancer or any other disease can remain dignified, attractive, and comfortable while undergoing treatments. They invented a hospital jacket that is fashionable and functional. The Original Healing Threads is a soft cozy garment that insures your privacy. Each garment is equipped with such features as break away pieces that Velcro open and shut, to allow access during radiation treatments, or to ports for chemotherapy. Attractive enough to wear on the street, these beautiful garments insure that your dignity and privacy are respected.

Healing Threads
Spirited Sisters, Inc.
www.spirited-sisters.com
(877) 647-3900

Lumpectomy and Mastectomy Prosthesis and Bras

It took me five years to learn that there were prosthesis and bras for lumpectomy as well as mastectomy patients. I still can't believe that I walked around for five years with a size D cup on one side and a size B cup on the other. I felt embarrassed by the difference in size, and was painfully aware of the way the nipples hung at different heights. My clothes didn't fit well, and I developed a nagging "stitch" in my back - a little pain that never went away. Since I discovered the following companies and the fabulous bras and garments they provide, my life has changed for the better. Survivors started both companies, and they are filling a much-needed service to all of us.

Jodee

One great company for lumpectomy and mastectomy bras and prostheses in all sizes is Jodee. I have tried several of their bras and they are terrific. I am standing up straighter and looking better in my clothes. Best of all, that stitch in my back is gone!
"Jodee" Prosthesis and Bras

3100 North 29th Ave.
Hollywood, FLA 33020
(800) 423-9038

Still You

Another inspiring company is "Still You" I was so excited by my meeting with Heather Kuzmier, the owner and designer for Still You, that I asked her to write a story for this book. She is enthusiastic, gorgeous, and filled with the passion of sharing her beautiful designs, a great example of a survivor who wants to help others. "Still You" is committed to making you feel that you're still beautiful after mastectomy. Yoga wear, athletic tanks, and camisoles with lightweight prosthesis are only a few of the items created by talented fashion designers at Still You. Her designs are so popular that they are currently available in over two hundred breast boutiques nationwide.

Here's Heather's story:

Still You

Breast Cancer is a journey; often it is the turning tide that will lead you to do better, greater things with your life. Breast Cancer has had a very positive impact on my life. While going through lumpectomy, subsequent mastectomy and chemo, there were many things I felt were missing. Why could I not find something attractive and beautiful to wear? Why did I have to use a piece of something like quilting batting to replace my breast after surgery?

My mother-in-law sent my sister, my friend Carole and I to New York where we visited mastectomy boutiques looking for beautiful nightgowns. I so wanted to be beautiful, and feel beautiful after my mastectomy. We could not find anything that did not look like a grandmother's gown. I was disappointed and I clearly remember sitting in the cab next to my friend, Carole and saying, "We need to do something about this."

After surgery, I was given a polyester fluff ball to wear as a breast (for the first eight weeks) and a granny top to put it in. I was told to pull out some of the stuffing to get it to the right size. I felt that this was such an insult to a woman who had just given up a breast. Again, I told my friend Carole that we must do something about this.

During my chemotherapy we started testing new ideas. We developed a prosthesis, the first one that looked realistic, could be worn immediately after surgery and could also be used for swimming. We also started a line of fashionable contemporary clothing with bilateral bra pockets.

It is often said that cancer changes you. It is true. Cancer changes you in ways that you can never imagine. It is truly the most significant experience in my life because it led me to do something helpful and worthwhile for society. It caused me to refocus my life on my family and friends and things that truly matter.

"So many women say that they want to make a change and develop products for breast cancer, but few actually do," my physician said.

In less than one year after my surgery, we started our company: "Still You."

At Still You, we recognize that each woman wants, needs, and deserves to look and feel beautiful. We are committed to providing women with an exceptional line of clothing to enhance self-esteem, build confidence and reflect the uniqueness of each woman. Our motto is: Still Confident, Still Beautiful, Still You.

- Heather Kuzmier

hkuzmier@StillYoufashions.com
Still You
www.stillyoufashions.com
(336) 282-9816

Make-up and beauty products can greatly enhance the way you feel about yourself during chemotherapy and radiation. Here is a great book, and a wonderful free service to help us feel and look better. Facing the Mirror with Cancer by Lori Ovitz
Julie@facingthemirror.org
(312) 214-3545

A beautiful book that teaches you to use make up to improve your appearance during cancer treatments.
Look Good...Feel Better
www.lookgoodfeelbetter.com
(800) 395-LOOK

If you are a breast cancer patient, you are eligible for free make up, wigs, scarves and training in how to use these items. Call your local American Cancer Society to find out when the next meeting is in your town. This is a wonderful free, non-medical program offered in partnership with the American Cancer Society, the National Cosmetology Assn. and the CTFA, a charitable organization supported by the cosmetic industry.

Women's Health Boutique

Vicki Dortch Jones and her sister, Seleta Dortch Lovell, founded Women's Health Boutique, "because women deserve more attention to their special needs."

Their mother, Billie Dortch, was diagnosed with terminal cancer in 1986. They were frustrated, wanting to make their mother's daily life easier and help restore her dignity that the cancer had taken away. It was only after Billie's death that the sisters were amazed to find so many products that could have helped her, that could have made her life more comfortable and that could restore a woman's dignity.

The mission of Women's Health Boutique is simple: "To meet women's special needs and make a positive difference in the way women look and feel about themselves. We are committed to excellence through compassion."

Women's Health Boutique offers a comfortable, dignified and discreet alternative to shopping for health-related merchandise — where personal service is the number one priority. Each of the beautiful Boutiques provides a relaxed setting where you will feel secure and at ease while selecting personal and intimate health care products. Fittings are done in private rooms with a certified fitter.

Women's Health Boutique
888.708.9982.
<http://www.w-h-b.com/>

Lifestyle Enhancers

The following products were extremely beneficial for me as I went through my treatments. Many of them are mentioned earlier as tips, but here is contact information. It is hard to drink water during some phases of medical treatment.

Sobe drinks were delicious and easy to drink when I couldn't tolerate water.

"Sobe" Drinks (especially Orange Carrot and Pink Grapefruit)
South Beach Beverages
Norwalk, CT
SoBeBev.Com

Tupperware is a company most of us remember from our childhood. They manufacture freezer containers in all sizes. They also make a Popsicle mold that can be used to make Chemo Pops .

"Tupperware" Popsicle Molds
Tupperware.com

One of the best and most soothing natural products for radiation burns comes straight from the Aloe Vera plant. The pure Aloe Vera gel can be found in most health food stores.

Aloe Vera Gel
For Radiation Burns
Available at Health Food Stores

Enjoy the benefits of drinking green and white tea. They are extremely good for fighting cancer and improving our immune system. Here's one of my favorite brands:

Republic of Tea
Green and White Tea
Novato, CA 94949
1-800-298-4TEA

I switched to natural grooming products wherever possible. I like this brand, "Tom's of Maine", a lot. The products are natural, they are available in most health food stores, and on the web.

Tom's Toothpaste, Mouthwash, Deodorant
Tom's of Maine
P.O. Box 710
Kennebunk, ME 04043
www.TomsOfMaine.com
1-800-FOR-TOMS

The Future Looks Bright

As a breast cancer survivor, I have a deep interest in new discoveries, new treatments and clinical trials, and new break-throughs toward finding a cure for breast cancer. We survivors hope and pray for a cure so that our daughters and grand daughters will not have to go through what we did. I am not a medical professional, but I am a breast cancer survivor, and in my opinion these companies are creating new drugs and treatments that give us hope and inspiration. From my viewpoint in mid 2006 here are some products you might be interested in checking out.

Arimidex

I am finishing up five years of daily medication with Tomoxifan and getting ready to switch to Arimidex for several more years. The clinical trials have been so encouraging for Arimidex that I am really looking forward to taking it. If it can improve my life span I will be a big supporter!

Astra Zeneca
ARIMIDEX
P.O. Box 15437
Wilmington, DE 19850-5437
(800) 456-3669
AstraZeneca.com

Herceptin

Some of the most exciting research is going on with the drug Herceptin. After tests and clinical trials, it looks like Herceptin will be available soon to be used by early stage breast cancer patients as well as those with metastases.

HERCEPTIN (trastuzumab)
Genentech, Inc.
1 DNA Way
So. San Francisco, CA 94080
www.gene.com

Emla

One of the most helpful products during my medical journey with breast cancer was Emla numbing cream. I am a big fan of anything that minimizes pain and makes getting injections easier. Emla really saved me, I am so grateful that my friend Pandora told my sister about it, and that my sister asked the nurses to use it on me. Now I don't faint when I have blood drawn. This, for me, was a miracle.

EMLA
Astra Pharmaceuticals, L.P.
725 Chesterbrook Blvd.
Wayne, PA 19087-5677

Pain Ease Numbing Spray

Recently I have discovered other numbing agents similar to Emla. This is a terrific idea, a numbing spray: Pain Ease works in seconds to numb the skin for up to one minute. It is a spray that can be reapplied as needed. Like Emla, it is a topical numbing agent. Easy to use and fast, see if you don't think this is a winner.

Pain Ease
Gebauer Company
www.gebauerco.com
(800) 321-9348

Anti-Nausea

I would particularly like to thank the makers of Zofran because I know it was this drug that kept me from being nauseated during my chemotherapy. It helped me tremendously, and I shudder to think what my experience might have been without this terrific anti-nausea drug.

ZOFRAN (Ondansetron)
GlaxoSmithKline
1600 Vine St.
Philadelphia, PA 19102
www.gsk.com
(800) 366-8900

More Anti-Nausea

Any type of anti-nausea drug is a good idea in my opinion. Emend is another type of drug that offers a similar result, no nausea! Hooray!

EMEND anti-nausea drug like Zofran
Merck and Co., Inc.
351 N. Sumneytown Pike
North Wales, PA 19454
www.merck.com

Neupogen

When my white blood cell count dropped after each chemotherapy treatment, my husband Don did a great job of injecting me with a syringe of Neupogen every day for nine days following treatment. This wonderful drug boosted my cell production, making it possible for me to stay on schedule and be strong enough for my next round of chemo. I called Don "Dr. Feelgood!"

NEUPOGEN (filgrastim)
Amgen Inc.
One Amgen Center Drive
Thousand Oaks, CA 91320
www.amgen.com

Xylocaine Mouthwash Gel

Lidocaine (Xylocaine) A local anesthetic that is effective, safe, and reliable topical wash or mouthwash antiseptic.

Prescribed by doctor
Drugstore.com

Biotene

Medications, radiation, illness, or normal aging can cause dry mouth. Daily use of Biotene's effective bio-active enzymatic therapy helps reduce the symptoms of Dry Mouth and helps relieve bleeding gums, gingivitis, minor gum irritations, and harmful bacteria.

Biotene Dry Mouth Toothpaste
Prescribed by doctor
www.laclede.com

Prevention Oncology Mouth Rinse

This mouth rinse contains only 1.6% alcohol and is clinically proven to heal ulcerations and preserve the normal, healthy bacteria while killing the rest. The low alcohol content makes it easier on your mouth during chemo. Sold over the counter at most drug stores and Walmart.

Preventionmouthrinse.com
(800) 473-1205

Soothing Mouth Care

A range of oral care products including Gel Toothpaste, Saliva Substitute, Mouth Rinse, Lip Moisturizer and others designed to soothe delicate oral tissue and prevent dry mouth.

Soothing Mouth Care Gel Moisturizer Saliva Substitute
Tri-State Hospital Supply
(800) 248-4058

Drain Management

This looks like an excellent new dressing for port/catheter site management. The transparent "window" shaped bandage has an integrated pad that wicks moisture away and provides a strong barrier against bacteria. It is latex-free and hypo-allergenic. It manages multiple drain tubes while giving continuous site visibility.

SorbaView 2000 Window Dressing
www.tshsc.com
(800) 248-4058

Medical Communities that Care

As a breast cancer patient, we are never really alone. Behind us, stand thousands of support people; families, friends, co-workers, nurses, doctors, scientists, drug manufacturers, hospital personnel, product designers and suppliers. The list goes on and on.

It takes a special kind of person to go into the field of nursing, and the most dedicated nurses of all are those that specialize in oncology (chemotherapy). I have never met such warm, sincere, and genuinely caring people in my life. I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to all the dedicated professionals who work tirelessly to bring hope and inspiration to those of us with breast cancer.

There are doctors all over the country who really are true healers; there are surgeons who specialize only in breast surgery. To these caring professionals, I extend a bouquet of pink ribbons from all the millions of breast cancer survivors you have saved.

Throughout the United States, there are hospitals with Breast Centers, Cancer Centers, Women's Health Boutiques, Quality of Life Centers, and Wellness Centers integrated right into the hospitals. In many of these hospitals there are Nurse Navigators who guide the newly diagnosed breast cancer patient through a medical maze. Thank you with all our hearts for continually improving the environment and the services for those newly- diagnosed as well as long term survivors.

When you think about it, there are actually millions of people all working hard for the benefit of breast cancer patients and survivors. How many millions run the Race for the Cure every year? How many thousands do the Three Day Walk for the Cure in cities all over the country? The quantity of support for us is mind-boggeling!

We even have our own month; October is Breast Cancer Awareness month. How many people can boast that they have their very own month?

I want to thank everyone who has been touched by breast cancer, all the families and friends, all the husbands and lovers, all the children who have helped Mommy get well. Without families and friends, the journey would not be successful. Thank you to everyone who buys a breast cancer stamp and uses it to mail a letter, just to benefit all of us breast cancer survivors.

Let's give a standing ovation to the pink ribbon ladies who raise millions of dollars for breast cancer research, all the walkers and runners and fund-raisers who have made this a top priority. Because of you, there is much more money available for research and improvements. Thanks to all of you, we are in the Pink! Because of your love, care, support, and professional abilities, we can and we do survive and thrive!

And last but not least, I send love, light, health and sunshine to breast cancer survivors everywhere. We have fought a fierce battle and won to celebrate another day, and another year, and another decade. We are heroes, who deserve to live our lives filled with love, health and happiness.

Together we transform our challenges into pearls of strength, healing, and fruitful and fulfilling lives.

Thank you, one and all.