



Cancer Q & A

with Kathy Kanavos

Ask Me Anything!

KATHY O'KEEFE KANAVOS ADDRESSES YOUR CONCERNS ABOUT CANCER

Dear Kathy,

Do you have any good tips for skin this is not healing following radiation therapy?

Fran

Dear Fran,

I used pure organic Aloe Vera gel at night, as well as Aquaphor, a lotion that feels much like Vaseline and is available in drug stores. I washed everything off in the mornings before my radiation treatment but applied it in the dressing room after treatment.

There is also a gel pack that was given to me by the nurses that is actually for burn victims to stimulate skin growth. I slept with that pack in my bra at night to relieve pain and stimulate healing.

My Radiation Oncologist gave me a prescription for about 8 tubes of "Beta-Val" or generic Betamethasone Valerate Cream USP, 0.1%. It worked great for me. He said to use it liberally but not to use it 2 hours prior to radiation. It is a thin white soothing and cooling cream that washes off easily in the shower. It didn't stain any bras or clothing. The tube says it can be used between one and three times per day.

I had no skin breakdown and only experienced some redness. I also only wore 100% cotton t-shirts, no bras or constricting clothes. I had my radiation at the end of the day, so that I didn't have to go to work and be fully clothed after treatment.

My radiation oncologist also gave me Aquaphor with lidacaine mixed in, for the pain, when the burns were sore. Also, she let me take a Thursday and Friday off from treatment, and together with the weekend, the 4-day break really healed the skin. It is amazing how the body heals itself.

Ask me anything.

Kathy

Dear Kathy,

Thank you, Kathy, for responding so wisely to my question in the [Spring issue](#).

It always helps to have someone else put things into perspective. It's amazing the "tricks" your mind plays on you during cancer treatment. Most of the time, I am upbeat and positive. It's when I am going through treatment that I get scared and freaked out.

I believe that after the last treatment in three days, I will once again be able to focus on the beauty of life instead of dwelling on the inevitability of death. Thanks again. You helped more than you can imagine.

Samy

Dear Samy,

Knowing that I could help alleviate some of your anxiety with a few words of wisdom from my own "Trial by Fire" gives me great joy.

Ask me anything.

Kathy

Dear Kathy,

I must wait longer for my last chemotherapy because my blood counts were too low for my treatment. My anxiety level is high and my tears keep falling. I have leiomyosarcoma and had a double mastectomy. I tell myself this fear and depression is normal before I start radiation, but I hate being trapped by fear.

Any advice about dealing with anxiety attacks?

Bonnie

Hi Bonnie,

I had the same problem with my blood counts, except it started after my second treatment. There are medications your doctor can give you to speed up the healing process. I took the injection Nulasta to help my blood levels recover.

It turned out that because I was actually so healthy that my body was "crashing" later- feeling the effects of the chemo as my blood counts dropped. Therefore, it seemed to take longer for me to recover, when in fact, it was the same amount of time. It was actually the crashing that took longer. You may be experiencing the same thing.

My treatments had to be postponed for a week until my blood levels recovered enough for me to have the next treatment, too. Yes, you get anxious because you want it all to be over as quickly as possible. Then you have to deal with the anxiety of the next step, radiation. I heard this same story from many of my friends in Radiation.

The friendships you make during radiation may last a life time. You will meet other women who will understand your fear because they will have experienced it themselves.

Fear of the unknown is something that haunts many of us in treatment. Just remember, the greatest fear is of fear itself. I found the calming effects of meditation, and a warm bath with soft music an escape from fear. Hold tight to your belief system. Your Higher Power already knows how big your troubles are. Tell your troubles how big your Higher Power is.

Good luck. You are almost finished. Stay in touch and let me know how you are doing. I care.

Ask me anything.

Kathleen

If you are struggling with your own diagnosis, or know someone who is, please email Kathy with your questions and concerns at:
katkan@comcast.net

Dear Kathy,

What did you do between treatments to build up your strength?

Paula

Dear Paula,

Treatment can make you weak and rebuilding strength is important.

I ate three to five small healthy meals a day, did an easy work out at the gym, and played sports like tennis, on days I felt up to it. Some of my friends in radiation got acupuncture in between treatments to relieve anxiety and increase their sleep, which helped build strength. Sleep is food for the soul.

I drew strength by surrounding myself with the things I loved, like warm bubble baths and classical music. Surround yourself with love and fill yourself with good nourishment.

Ask me anything.

Kathy

Kathleen O'Keefe-Kanavos is a two-time breast cancer survivor who penned **SURVIVING CANCERLAND: The Psychic Aspects of Healing**.

She is represented by Scovil, Galen & Ghosh Literary Agency & **Steve Allen Media**. She's a phone counselor for R.A. BLOCH Cancer Foundation, Q&A cancer columnist for *CapeWomenOnlineMagazine*, an inspirational speaker, mentor, cancer volunteer, and Cambridge Who's Who Executive Professional of the Year 2009-2010.

Kathy was recently interviewed on the Dr. Pat radio show, and told how her dreams found her cancer that the doctors missed. You can listen to a podcast [here](#).

Visit her [website](#) and [Facebook page](#); follow her on [Twitter](#) ; and connect with her on [LinkedIn](#).

Kathleen O'Keefe-Kanavos was interviewed on the Dr. Bernie Siegel Show on January 3rd

Follow either of these links to listen to her interview about Healing Dreams:

[HealthyLife.Net with Bernie Siegel, MD](#)

[Direct Link](#) to Kathy's Interview

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