

Breast Cancer Support Group Sussex



Dates
For Your
Diary

Hi All

Happy 2019!

Happy Valentines Day!

And welcome to the first newsletter of 2019!

I expect for many of us the festive season is a distant memory, but I hope that you all had an enjoyable time.

We're currently looking at events and speakers for this year so if anyone has any suggestions please let me know.

I look forward to seeing you at Monday's meeting

Best wishes

Gwen

February 18

Our Monthly Group Meeting

March 14

Specialist Bra Event
Marks & Spencer
Western Rd, Brighton
6pm to 8pm

March 18

Our Monthly Group Meeting

April 15

Our Monthly Group Meeting

**Macmillan
Horizon Centre,**
Bristol Gate (opp
A&E at the RSCH)
**NOTE change in
time to 6.15pm
to 8.15pm**



M&S



SPECIALIST BRA EVENT

*You are cordially invited to attend the Specialist Bra Event
where you can view the range of post surgery bras and
matching knickers*

On: Thursday 14th March 2019

Time: 6pm to 8pm

Where: Marks and Spencer, 195 Western Road, Brighton

Come along and enjoy

- Complimentary drinks and nibbles*
- Quiz and raffle prizes*
- Specialist advice*
- Beauty treatments*

RSVP T: Nikki or Rachel 01273 328081 ext 3623
E: danielle.simpson@marks-and-spencer.com

All donations from the evening will be given to Macmillan

I'm a person, a mother and a sister. My breast cancer took over all of that

Breast cancer doesn't discriminate. This World Cancer Day we're sharing Bal and Sania's stories of how their breast cancer diagnosis affected their lives, careers and self-image.



Bal: I barely had time for my feet to touch the ground

I was diagnosed in August 2015. I had no symptoms, no lump – nothing to make me think I could have breast cancer. I had a routine medical check-up at work and because of my age, they gave me a mammogram.

When I was told I had breast cancer, my world turned upside down in a matter of moments.

I barely had time for my feet to touch the ground. I was diagnosed on 20th August and my treatment started on 12th September. After having a mastectomy, they found there was also cancer in my lymph nodes. A few weeks after surgery for lymph node removal, I started my chemotherapy treatment. It felt like I didn't have a moment to breathe.

There wasn't a light at the end of the tunnel

Chemotherapy took all my energy. Every time I had a chemotherapy session, my body felt weaker. It felt harder for my body to fight the further I got into treatment. There wasn't a light at the end of the tunnel.

I had radiotherapy after my chemotherapy ended. Then I was on tamoxifen straight after for nine months. After a checkup with my surgeon, we found out that I had developed a tumor. Whenever I got over one hurdle, there was always another one in front. I couldn't register what was going on, and a lot of it, I didn't understand.

I wanted to feel normal

When I was about halfway through my treatment, I looked through the binder that my breast care nurse had given me when I was diagnosed. This was when I saw all the information about Breast Cancer Care. One of the leaflets mentioned the Someone Like Me service.

I rang up and was put in touch with a woman who spoke to me once a week. It was so uplifting to talk to someone without being judged and who really listened. Until you've had breast cancer, you don't really understand what it's like. Half the time we didn't even talk about breast cancer. When your whole world has become hospital appointments, this scan and that blood test sometimes you don't want to talk about it. You want to feel normal.

I felt really lost when it all ended. I didn't know where to go. My Someone Like Me volunteer had mentioned the Moving Forward course, so I signed up. It was so helpful. When you've been given the worst news of your life, your brain isn't thinking about help. You're trying to cope. Sometimes you need someone to hold your hand and show you what you might need. The Moving Forward course did that for me.

Helping others gives me a purpose

I'm a person, a mother and a sister. But my breast cancer took over all of that. Certain things can get pushed aside during treatment, if you let them. I was determined to not let that happen.

I think I managed because when I needed help, I was able to find it. I wouldn't want someone else not knowing that there's support available to them. That's why I've gone on to offer my time to help as many people I can.

With Breast Cancer Care, I've been a volunteer and model at The Show, I get involved with campaigns and speak for them at events. I do youth mentoring through the Prince's Trust and I'm a governor for a special needs school.

For a while I wondered, am I hiding behind all the things that I do? But I'm not. It's given me a purpose. If I can help one person, then it's all worthwhile.



Sania: It was a whole new world

In December 2017, I noticed a small lump on the right side of my breast. I left it for two weeks, as I thought it might be hormonal. When I went to the GP, they referred me straight away to the breast clinic.

When I was told it was breast cancer, I didn't really register what had happened. It took a while for it to kick in. I come from a health background, and I'd never been a patient before or taken time off. Suddenly I was on a treatment plan for IVF, a mastectomy, chemotherapy and radiotherapy.

It was a whole new world. It felt surreal.

I didn't process it properly

My oncologist spoke to me about IVF in my initial appointment. Even as a doctor, I wasn't thinking about fertility treatment. All I was concerned about was losing my hair and nausea. But having the fertility treatment was a huge relief. Even at the beginning, I was planning for my life after treatment.

You settle into a routine with breast cancer treatment. Chemotherapy, appointments, blood tests. But you can't always be prepared for what happens. Although you try and control it as much as you can, the nature of going through treatment is that it's out of your hands.

At the time you're so focused on what you're going through in that moment, you don't really process it properly.

Nobody understands unless you've been there too

I come from a Pakistani background, and nobody really talks about cancer, let alone breast cancer. If someone is going through treatment, nobody mentions it. Self-examination isn't something that's discussed. It was a difficult conversation to have with my family, but they were amazing.

It wasn't easy. Even though they wanted to do as much as they could, nobody understands unless they've been in your position. My parents are so calm, so they balanced me out.

I also attended the Younger Women Together and Moving Forward events by Breast Cancer Care. Being in a group of women in my position in a non-judging environment was incredible.

You must rebuild yourself back up

There's always that expectation that once you finish treatment, you go straight back to normal. What people don't appreciate is that finishing treatment feels like you've jumped off the edge of a cliff. You go from having a safety net of support to suddenly having to fend for yourself.

After going through treatment, you're physically, mentally and emotionally different to how you were before. You've got to rebuild yourself back up. But I feel empowered too. Losing my hair and going through drastic physical changes had made me appreciate my body more and what it can withstand. I feel proud of myself for getting through it.

Breast cancer taught me a lot

I'd never experienced anything like this before in my profession, It's taught me a lot about being a patient, and I feel a lot more empathetic towards the kind of obstacles that my younger female patients are facing.

It was a bit of a double edge sword. I didn't want to know too much and resisted jumping back into my medical mind and reading loads of papers and research statistics!

Going through breast cancer has brought out a side of me I'm proud of. I feel a lot less afraid of things than I was before.

This World Cancer Day, donate to help us provide hope for the future as we unite to create one charity for everyone affected by breast cancer with [Breast Cancer Now](#).

What to sow and grow in February



*With crocus' flowering, it's a sign that winter is coming to a close
Image: **Crocus 'Ruby Giant'** by Thompson & Morgan*

February might be the cold, tail end of winter, but springtime is only around the corner. There are plenty of flowers, fruits and vegetables to sow and grow this month. Here are our top picks:

Flowers to sow and grow



*Give your begonias a head start by planting them in a frost-free position
Image: **Stanislav71***

Here are the flowers that can be most successfully sown and grown in February:

In the greenhouse/indoors

- Sow lobelia in a heated propagator.
- Plant begonia tubers (hollow side up) in pots of moist compost and cover with a little more compost. Keep them in a bright, frost-free position.
- Sow *antirrhinums* (snapdragons) and *laurentia* now to ensure early flowering.
- Start dahlia tubers into growth by planting them in pots of compost, maintaining a minimum temperature of 10 degrees celsius.
- Sow sweet peas in a glasshouse, cold frame or a cool place indoors. Soak sweet pea seeds in tepid water overnight before planting them, to speed up germination.
- Grow your own chrysanthemum plants from seed – start them off now in the greenhouse for the earliest blooms.
- Sow geraniums (*pelargoniums*) indoors now for earlier flowers.
- Plant or pot on hardwood cuttings taken last year.
- Pot on rooted cuttings of tender perennial plants taken last summer.

Plant outdoors

- Plant lilies and allium bulbs. Although best done in autumn, you can get away with planting lilies and alliums until spring.
- Plant bare root roses in a sunny position for spectacular summer colour.
- Plant fragrant winter-flowering shrubs to add interest to borders, such as daphne, *viburnum x bodnantense* 'Dawn', witch hazel (*hamamelis x intermedia*) and wintersweet (*chimonanthus praecox*).

Vegetables and herbs to sow and grow



You can really get cracking in the vegetable garden this month.

Here are the crops to focus on:

In the greenhouse/indoors

- Start growing (chitting) early potatoes on a windowsill indoors.
- Start sowing cucumber and tomato seeds for the greenhouse, in warm conditions.
- Sow peas – try sowing them in upcycled guttering with drainage holes drilled in the bottom.
- Start asparagus pea seeds under cover for planting out in late spring.
- Sow aubergine seeds now for indoor crops this summer.
- Grow your own basil on the windowsill to flavour your favourite Italian dishes and fill your kitchen with heady Mediterranean aromas.
- Start early sowings of brassicas under cover. Try Brussels sprouts, summer cabbage, cauliflower 'All the Year Round', and calabrese 'Aquiles'.
- Start slow-growing celeriac seeds now under cover.
- Try bolt-resistant varieties of celery, such as 'Lathom Self Blanching', for early sowings.
- Sow leeks under cover – these vegetables need a long growing season.
- Try growing really large onions this year – sow 'Bunton's Showstopper' and 'Ailsa Craig' indoors now.
- Sow sweet peppers for growing on in a heated greenhouse. Always provide plenty of warmth.

In the cold frame/under cloches



- Sow broad beans, carrots, parsnips, early beetroot, salad onions, lettuces, radish, peas, spinach and summer cabbages outside under cloches, if you have light (sandy) soil and live in a mild part of the UK.
- Sow beetroot under cover.
- Sow early carrot varieties, such as 'Nantes 2', under cloches or in greenhouse borders.
- Grow chicory under cloches, for early summer harvesting.
- Sow early peas under cloches for your first crop of the season. 'Twinkle' is a good variety for this.
- Sow radish seeds now under cloches or in greenhouse borders.
- Grow some salad leaves, lettuce or spinach indoors or under cloches for a tasty and nutritious start to the growing season.
- Sow seeds of spring onions under cloches, in greenhouse borders or in cold frames. 'Ishikura' and 'Summer Isle' are good early varieties.

Direct sow outdoors

- Direct sow hardy broad beans, such as 'Aquadulce Claudia', if the soil isn't frozen.

Plant outdoors

- Plant out garlic and shallots in light soils only; heavy soils still need longer to warm up.
- Plant Jerusalem artichoke tubers.

Fruit to sow and grow



February is a good time for planting the following fruits:

- Plant raspberry canes and blackberries provided the soil isn't frozen or waterlogged.
- Plant redcurrants, whitecurrants, blackcurrants and gooseberries if soil conditions are right.
- Plant bare-root strawberry plants outside now. Replace plants that are 3 years old or more, as they will have lost much of their vigour.
- Plant [stone fruit trees](#), such as apricots, peaches and nectarines.
- Plant [rhubarb crowns](#) in a sunny position in well drained soil.

Keep one step ahead - what to order this month:



Order perennials like foxgloves in February

Image: Foxglove 'Excelsior Hybrid Mixed' by Thompson & Morgan

- Order sweet pea seeds to sow under cloches, in a cold frame, or in a cool room.
- Buy perennial plants like foxgloves
- Order summer bedding plug plants

There's nothing to be ashamed of

Having faced his own diagnosis, David is keen to raise awareness of breast cancer in men, and to support men going through the same thing.

David was 51 when he found a lump on his right breast in 1999.

'I had some vague idea that men could have breast cancer,' says David, 'but I had not given it much thought, although one of my three sisters had had it some time ago.'

His doctor, who thought it might not be anything serious, referred David to the local breast clinic in Colchester. Tests revealed the lump was cancer.

'I was not too worried about it,' says David, 'and had confidence that the hospital could help me.'

Surprised

David told family first about his diagnosis, followed by friends.

'They were surprised that men could have it, but seemed to accept it,' he says.

Around 370 men a year in the UK are diagnosed with breast cancer.

David had a mastectomy as part of his treatment.

'I did not have any pain after the operation,' he says. 'The hospital was on a hill, and there was a window at the head of my bed, giving me an open view of Colchester.'

'When I left hospital my right arm was stiff and I had difficulty raising my arm for a few weeks. Now it only feels uncomfortable if I have a seatbelt across the scar.'

After his surgery, David was put on the hormone therapy drug tamoxifen for five years.

I'm not embarrassed

David says he's not embarrassed by the fact that he had breast cancer.

'I have sometimes walked topless on the beach or swimming pools,' he says. 'I have also been on a BBC programme where I showed my scar.'

He does feel that there isn't enough publicity about breast cancer in men.

David, who is deaf, started volunteering with Breast Cancer Care to raise awareness.

'At first I gave talks about breast cancer to groups of deaf people, both men and women,' he says. 'I once took part in a talk to some staff in the Houses of Parliament.'

David also appeared on the catwalk as a model at Breast Cancer Care's London fashion show in 2007.

He now offers email support to other men with breast cancer through the one-to-one support service Someone Like Me.

'I decided to become a volunteer because I felt that I had something to offer,' he says. 'I used to work in a biology lab in a university and was familiar with health matters.'

David suggests men should be aware of the symptoms of breast cancer and check themselves. 'It doesn't take long,' he says.



For men who find themselves in his position, David recommends the Breast Cancer Care online Forum. 'I found it very helpful and supportive,' he says.

'There's nothing to be ashamed of.'

To find out about Breast Cancer Care's Someone Like Me service, visit breastcancercare.org.uk or call 0808 800 6000.

Butternut squash, butterbean & mushroom cobbler



Ingredients

FOR THE PIE FILLING:

- 400g squash (butternut, hubbard or acorn)
- 4 tbsp vegetable oil
- 1 onion, chopped
- 20g root ginger, peeled weight, grated
- 3 large garlic cloves, peeled and grated
- 3 tomatoes, quartered
- $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp turmeric
- $\frac{1}{2}$ -1 tsp chilli powder
- 2 tsp ground coriander
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp garam masala
- salt, to taste

- good pinch of freshly ground black pepper
- 9-10 large chestnut mushrooms, thickly sliced
- 400g can butterbeans, drained and rinsed
- 100g baby spinach
- 6 tbsp double cream
- 50ml whole milk
- ½-1 tbsp tomato purée (optional)
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FOR THE COBBLER TOPPING:

- 175g self-raising flour, sifted, plus more to dust
- 1/3tsp salt
- 70g unsalted butter, cut into smallish pieces
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 55-65ml whole milk
- A few sea salt flakes

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 200°C/400°F/gas mark 6. Place the squash, skin on, in a roasting tin and cook until soft, around 30 minutes. Remove any fibres and seeds and cut into 2.5cm squares.
2. Meanwhile, heat the oil in a large saucepan until hot. Add the onion and cook until soft and colouring at the edges. Add the ginger and garlic and cook until the garlic just starts to colour. Add the tomatoes, spices and seasoning and cook down until the sauce has thickened and has released oil back into the pan.
3. Add the mushrooms, cover and cook for another two to three minutes. Pour in 200ml of water and add the beans, squash and spinach and return to the boil. Cook for two to three minutes. Add the cream and milk, taste - making sure you taste both squash and sauce - and adjust the seasoning. Stir in the tomato purée if you feel the tomatoes are lacking flavour or colour. By now the sauce should be thick and cling to the vegetables. Spoon into a large pie dish, or six individual dishes.
4. Make the cobbler topping. Place the flour and salt in a large bowl, add the butter and rub between your fingers until you have a sandy texture. Make a well in the middle, add half the egg and most of the milk and bring together with a fork to a very soft dough. Turn out on to a floured work surface and lightly bring together. Pat out until it is about 1cm thick and, using a pastry cutter, cut out six rounds. (I use large cutters and make the rounds big enough to cover the filling with just a little showing at the sides.)
5. Place the cobbler rounds on the pie filling, brush with the remaining beaten egg, sprinkle over some sea salt and bake on the middle shelf of the oven until the pastry is a lovely deep golden, around 20-25 minutes.