

The Power of Early Detection

Quick, compassionate care from Kaiser Permanente helped Jo Peek overcome early-stage breast cancer. Pictured, Jo Peek and Barbara Talley, breast cancer survivors and friends who first met in the Kaiser Permanente Martinez Medical Offices waiting room.

With no family history of the disease, Jo Peek, a publisher in Danville, California, was shocked when she found out that she had stage 1 breast cancer at the age of 42. “I first noticed a lump under my left arm while sitting on the couch one night,” she recalled. “My gut told me to go and check it out.”

Peek made an appointment the next day with her ob-gyn, Nancy Ann Everett, MD, at the Kaiser Permanente Livermore Medical Offices. Dr. Everett made an appointment for Peek the next morning at the Breast Care Center at Kaiser Permanente Martinez Medical Offices.

When Peek arrived, the Breast Care Center waiting room was full of women. After her own mammogram, Peek was encouraged to get an ultrasound to investigate the lump further. The radiologist asked her if she could stay to get a biopsy.

“It was a one-day assessment,” said Peek. “By lunch time, that full waiting room was down to just me and another woman. We looked at each other but had nothing to say. We were both in shock. I knew they had found something and that’s why we were still there, when everyone else had left.”

‘A Path Forward’

Two days later, Peek got the call with the news.

“They told me to come back to Kaiser Permanente Walnut Creek Medical Center to meet with a multidisciplinary team of specialists to outline my course of action,” said Peek.

When Peek entered the oncology office and stood in line to check in, she got a tap on the shoulder. It was the same woman from the waiting room in Martinez.

“Looks like you got the same news I did,” the woman, Barbara Tally, said. Immediately they exchanged phone numbers.

That day, Peek met with surgeons, oncologists, counselors, and a personal scheduler, who provided her with all her appointments going forward.

Two days later, Peek went in for her lumpectomy with [Alison Savitz, MD](#). The recovery was smooth, and Peek resumed her usual activities in about a week.

In all, in addition to a lumpectomy, Peek’s treatment consisted of 30 days of radiation, followed by

Tamoxifen, a daily pill that blocks the effects of estrogen in the breast tissue for 5 years.

“I appreciate the swiftness of Kaiser Permanente,” she said. “I wasn’t confused. There was a clear path forward. I was newly single and having this streamlined system with a counselor to call, if I needed it, was incredible.”

A Community Builds

When Tally went in for her own surgery, Peek sat with Tally’s husband in the waiting room for support.

Now Peek and Tally continue to stay in touch and update each other on their lives — a new marriage for Peek, grandchildren for Tally — and feel grateful they were able to meet and help one another during such a hard time.

“The ease of Kaiser Permanente’s system not only saved my life, but it made me feel like everything would be OK,” said Peek. “I want women to know that if this happens to them, it’s not the end of the world. With the great care at Kaiser Permanente, they can go back to living a full life, perhaps even healthier than before.”