

Beauty Behind the Beast: Cancer “Life and Style” Survey Reveals How Body Image and Self-Esteem Impacts Recovery For Women

82% of women rank support for appearance-related challenges and lifestyle issues as essential to their recovery

There are over 8 million women in the United States who have received life-altering cancer diagnoses and are currently undergoing treatment or in survivorship, according to data from the American Cancer Society. Cancer Be Glammed® and Wrapped in Love®, two companies born out of personal experiences with cancer, conducted a unique survey to identify the impact of emotional and lifestyle challenges women face from the physical traumas of surgery and treatment. The medical community refers to these as the psychosocial effects of cancer and they can wreak havoc on a woman’s sense of self, body-acceptance, and self-esteem.

876 women age 18 through 75 and older, with various types of cancer, participated in the Recovery Life & Style Survey. Close to 50 percent of women rated support for body-image issues and improved self-esteem as extremely important to overall recovery, ranking it a 10 (on a scale from one to ten.) An overwhelming 82% ranked this type of support as an eight or higher.

“We lose part of our existing identity when undergoing cancer treatment and have to redefine ourselves physically and emotionally. Being able to be somewhat fashionable in the middle of that helps us feel less isolated, and more included in the world’s beauty,” said one survey respondent.

The most common form of treatment women surveyed received was surgery, followed by chemotherapy and radiation. Often women said they had multiple forms of treatment, each with its own unique recovery challenges.

The top five post-operative difficulties women ranked as significant (from most to least) were limited arm and leg mobility, showering, getting dressed (need for easy-access clothing), dealing with surgical site drains and scar coverage. Of the nearly 700 women who underwent chemotherapy, 89% ranked hair loss, including lashes and eyebrows, as the most devastating, visible sign of cancer. Following that, women identified coping with nail problems, skin issues, and weight loss or gain as their most common struggles.

“I was totally unprepared for the appearance-related side effects of surgery and treatment,” said Lisa Lurie, a breast cancer survivor and the Co-Founder of Cancer Be Glammed. “I underwent a double mastectomy without reconstruction and chemotherapy. I became bald, breast-less, bloated from steroids. It was soul destroying for me and my family. I felt like a cancer created Humpty Dumpty. I didn’t know how to put myself back together again.”

Karen MacDonald, Founder of Wrapped in Love, witnessed the physical toll cancer took on her mom when she was in the hospital with non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma and pulmonary fibrosis. “A

fashionable wrap to cover her hospital gown and a little makeup transformed my mom's last Christmas from a day she felt sick and run down into one where her pride was restored. It was in that moment that I realized how impactful it can be to feel like yourself and not like a patient whose appearance is defined by their disease. I knew I had to find a way to uplift more women through fashionable healing products that were functional yet fashionable."

Overall, survey respondents had a unified voice expressing how cancer stripped them of their identities and made their bodies physically unrecognizable. Even after their treatments ended, many women faced ongoing challenges with lymphedema and neuropathy. Survey respondents expressed a clear desire to look better and to feel comfortable in their own skin again. And, they shared how having access to practical, yet fashionable recovery products tailored to their needs improved their outlook and made them feel empowered.

The top five recovery and lifestyle products women used or wanted were hair loss solutions like beautiful headscarves, hats and wigs, post-operative recovery wear including stylish mastectomy bras and wraps for ostomy coverage, fashionable clothing with easy access to chemotherapy ports, comfortable apparel that manages and disguises surgical drains, and adaptive, easy-to-wear clothing including adjustable pants and front opening wraps, bras and shirts. **For women facing ongoing challenges with lymphedema and neuropathy, fashionable lymphedema sleeves, gauntlets and other compression wear were the most preferred products.** Notably, women said in addition to products they also needed more sources and information on lifestyle and recovery support.

Another survey respondent commented, "Having a resource to help to lift our spirits and give us a renewed sense of beauty would be invaluable. Even my doctor spoke about the connection between mental health and physical health."

Lisa and Karen plan to utilize the survey results to reinforce their efforts to provide relevant lifestyle information, survivor-inspired recovery solutions and products to their communities. They plan to share the survey results with cancer hospitals, oncology professionals and support organizations that work with women to improve their psychosocial recovery. And to advocate for the beauty, fashion and health and wellness industries to create an inclusive culture for women coping with cancer by making fashionable yet functional recovery products more widely available for the millions of women who need them.

About Cancer Be Glammed

Cancer Be Glammed is the premier lifestyle brand educating and empowering women to take charge of their recovery with confidence, renewed self-esteem and personal style, from diagnosis through survivorship. Cancer Be Glammed works closely with the oncology community to provide patient-engagement tools to support women coping with the psychosocial fallout of cancer, and they are relentless advocates determined to help women heal "as people not patients." For more information, visit: www.Cancerbeglammed.com.

About Wrapped in Love

Wrapped in Love is a clothing and accessories line designed to provide comfort, dignity and style for women coping with cancer from treatment through recovery. Inspired by the founder's experience with her mother's illness, Wrapped in Love turns function into fashion. The unique apparel includes chemotherapy port-accessible shoulder wraps, headwear for hair loss, PICC line sleeves, and tops with hidden drain pockets to make post-surgery recovery easier and more fashionable. For more information, visit: www.wrappedinlove.com.

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