

LOCAL

New push to help young women fighting breast cancer

More women are being diagnosed at a younger age with breast cancer.



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CHARLOTTE, N.C. -- More women are being diagnosed at a younger age with breast cancer. That means a whole new set of challenges for both patients and doctors. But a new program at Levine Cancer Institute is aimed at tackling this head-on. Think about it: a woman in her 30s is at a different stage of life than a woman in her 50s. With that being said, there may be scheduling issues: from having to juggle between being a mom, going to work and then following good health habits.

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Erin DeMarco was 35, her kids being 3 and 5 years old at the time, when she received the devastating news.

"I think your body goes into shock," Erin said. "I'm like, 'oh my gosh, I have these children, I have to get this out.'"

She'd felt something was off. She went for a mammogram much earlier than the suggested age and learned that she, in fact, had stage 1 breast cancer.

"I was like I'm gonna be around. We're going to do what we have to be around. That's where your mind goes: thinking about family first," Erin said.

Erin is part of a growing number of young women being diagnosed with breast cancer.

Dr. Lejla Hadzikadic-Gusic of Levine Cancer Institute said, "It seems to be increasing so there has been a national focus towards women."

The treatment for younger patients, physically and mentally, can be different than what is traditionally prescribed for women who are older or at a different stage of life.

Erin adds, "It's such a busy time of life. I was a stay at home, [then] busy, you're already tired and barely sleeping."

So Levine Cancer Institute is launching the "Sandra Levine Young Women's Breast Cancer Program."

"We wanted to focus on younger women so we can make sure we are addressing all those things they need throughout their treatment," Dr. Hadzikadic-Gusic said.

The new program will tackle everything from fertility issues to cutting-edge treatments. There are support groups for the women to connect. More than twenty survivors are working with the doctors to help shape the program.

Demarco says, "I think it's a huge game changer for Levine Cancer Institute to have this opportunity for women."



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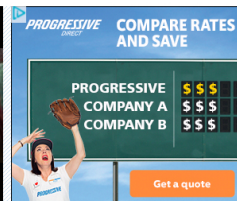
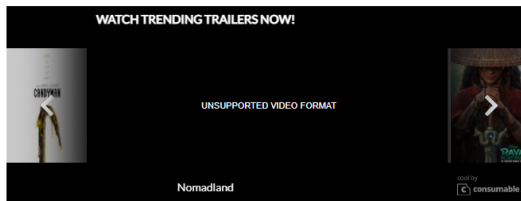
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