

Women's Health

Actress Kathy Bates
details her personal struggle
of overcoming both breast
and ovarian cancer.

INSIDE

How early detection
immediately improves
your odds of survival

ONLINE

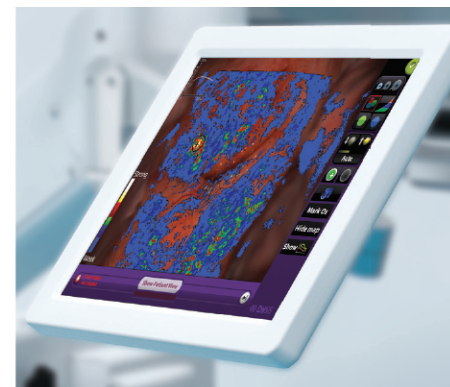
An expert panel
clarifies key concerns
of gynecological cancers



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i HEALTH HACKS

4 Things You May Not Realize You're Covered For

Health insurance coverage and access to affordable care is something that all women should have regardless of their income, where they live or their medical history.

In the last few years, with legislation like the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and with more clarity around genetics and family history, women have more access than ever to preventative services and treatment options through their health insurance.

While great strides have been made, there is still more policy work to be done. Below are a few areas of recent coverage you should take advantage of for your health:

Birth control: Thanks to the ACA, women can receive birth control with no cost sharing under their insurance plans. Birth control can reduce the risk of ovarian cancer up to 50 percent when taken for five years. Birth control can also reduce painful periods, treat endometriosis, treat heavy periods and help improve PMS.

Annual well-woman visit: Preventative services during your annual well-woman visit are now covered with no out-of-pocket costs. Take advantage of this yearly benefit to talk to your doctor about your family's cancer history and your risk for gynecologic cancer.

Pre-existing conditions: Before the ACA, if you had certain pre-existing medical conditions an insurance company could deny you insurance. That practice is no longer allowable under federal law, but more work needs to be done to ensure that effective treatment options are available to all at-risk patients.

Genetic testing: The guidelines as to whom is eligible for genetic testing are rapidly changing because of how fast science is moving in the field of genetics. Be sure to go through your family's cancer history with your doctor to find out if genetic testing is the right step for you and your health.

By Calaneet Balas, Executive Vice President, Ovarian Cancer Research Fund Alliance



PHOTO: KEITH MUNYAN

Kathy Bates: Overcoming Ovarian and Breast Cancer

By Liane Bonin Starr

When the Oscar-winning actress was first diagnosed, she felt pressure to stay silent. Now she's speaking out in the hopes women everywhere can stay healthy.

If not for a close friend urging her to visit the doctor, Kathy Bates may not be here today. "She saved my life," recalls the star of "American Horror Story" of her diagnosis. She had been feeling flushed and tired, but chalked it up to work. "It would have been easy for me to write off all of those things if she hadn't been there."

Struck twice

Despite testing negative for the BRCA gene mutation—"I didn't feel that was a get out of jail free card," Bates says, noting her family history of cancer—the actress was eventually diagnosed with breast cancer nine years after surviving ovarian cancer. She admits, "I was less vigilant. I'd come off a show and I was exhausted. I really wished I had caught it then."

Bates chose to have a double mastectomy, but also picked a different public approach to her illness. "My manager didn't want me to be the poster child for ovarian cancer. Then I got breast cancer, and that, combined with seeing Melissa Etheridge doing her thing, made me say, 'Why not?' I wanted to give women a face to this cancer."

Additional concerns

Bates also became an outspoken ambassador for the Lymphatic Education & Research Network (LE&RN) in the fight against lymphedema, which can affect up to 70 percent of breast cancer survivors. "The challenge is getting the word out," she says. "Surgeons usually focus on the cancer, period. Unfortunately, people do not get diagnosed."

Bates feels lucky to have a less severe case of lymphedema, and hopes speaking about cancer and lymphedema will promote greater awareness. "Women should make regular visits to the gynecologist and do breast self-exams," she says, reflecting. "Often they're so busy they forget to take care of themselves." ■



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