

Billings woman advocates for annual screening after diagnosis of breast cancer

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During her routine annual mammogram screening for breast cancer, Renee LeSueur's care team noticed an area they wanted to monitor.

"Renee had a few microcalcifications and we wanted to keep a close eye on them to monitor any potential changes," said Dr. Kalie Adler, a women's imaging specialist with the Intermountain Health St. Vincent Breast Center.

Calcifications in breast tissue are common and are often benign, but they can also be a sign of developing cancer if changes are observed in the breast.

"In Renee's follow-up imaging, I noticed that one of the calcifications had disappeared," said Dr. Adler. "That struck me as a little bit concerning so I recommended a biopsy."

The biopsy and additional testing confirmed a breast cancer diagnosis.

Although the news was difficult, LeSueur was grateful that the cancer was detected early, meaning she might not require invasive or extensive treatment. She was scheduled for a lumpectomy, a surgery to remove the affected breast tissue or "lump." After a successful operation, and in consultation with her



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Dr. Kalie Adler and Renee LeSueur



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Renee LeSueur with husband, Larry

oncologist, it was determined that she would need radiation treatments, but not chemotherapy.

LeSueur shared that through her experience she battled difficult thoughts and moments at times but that she has learned a lot about herself.

"Through the whole journey, I found something in me that I didn't know I had. A strength that comes from within," she said. "The best outcome for me was to know just how precious life is and to enjoy every day."

LeSueur's story underscores the importance of regular screening and early detection of breast cancer. When caught early, treatment can be more effective, less aggressive, and survival rates are significantly higher.

LeSueur shared her gratitude for Dr. Adler and her Intermountain Health care team for their careful

monitoring of her case and compassionate care, which led to a positive outcome and being cancer-free.

Dr. Adler recommends that all women follow the guidelines for screening for breast cancer starting at age 40, or earlier if you have a family history of breast cancer or other risk factors.

"It is also important to know your own body," said Dr. Adler. "If you notice any subtle changes, we want to know so we can check it out."

If you have questions about when to start screening or changes in your breast health, Dr. Adler encourages women to talk with their primary care provider.

To learn more about breast cancer screening or to schedule a mammogram, call the Intermountain Health St. Vincent Breast Center at 406.237.4373 or visit svh.org/mammography.

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