

Clothes and beauty for women fighting breast cancer

By Marilyn Wetston, QMI AGENCY

April is Cancer Month, and as such, I've received many questions from women battling breast cancer. I'd like to address the various specific problems here.

Cancer treatment affects a person's life in many ways and changes their physical appearance. I am often asked how to deal with loss of hair and/or loss of a breast. I usually refer women to others who have made it their career to help those in need.

Any woman who has had breast surgery will be happy to learn about designer Janet Cockburn, who created Janac's Mastectomy Wear line. As well as being a cancer survivor who has had two mastectomies, Janet is also a champion dragon boat racer who experienced the need for a sports bra and a comfortable prosthetic that wasn't too expensive. She invented the Been-a-Boob, a prosthesis that moves like a real breast. It is comfortable in all temperatures and molds to the shape of any bra cup. It is washable, dries quickly and is therefore swimsuit friendly. The reasonable price and availability in locations across Canada has assisted in Janet's mission to help all fighters and survivors of breast cancer. She will gladly share her story and answer any questions. Her website is Janacmastectomywear.com and the toll-free number 1-866-290-0821.

For any woman dreading the search for a swimsuit, there is a fairy godmother in Canada - more specifically, in Mississauga, Ontario - and her name is Maria Salajko of Coral Coast Custom Swimwear (Coralcoastswimwear.com; 905-891-9334). For over 21 years, Maria has designed and made swimsuits for all women, and makes life especially easy for women who have had surgery. Her swimsuits have pockets for prosthetics and her custom swimwear works for anyone. Maria has never disappointed a client!

Every woman, especially one who has had breast cancer, needs a good bra and designer Yvonne Hogenes' Tab Bra is a great utility option. Licensed by Health Canada, her four-in-one bra is a fashion bra, a sports bra, a mastectomy bra and a nursing bra. It has no underwire or elastic and supports women without putting pressure on their shoulders. It is available in all sizes and cups from A to JJ from independent distributors who do custom fittings throughout Canada. Visit Tabbra.com for more information.

For women who have experienced hair loss of any kind, hair replacement expert Amalia Ruggiero of Capilia of Truly You Hair Solution Centres offers help. Amalia started Truly You to fill a need that she encountered when her mom and sister were each diagnosed with breast cancer seventeen years ago. She now has two locations in Ontario and a team of hair replacement experts throughout Canada who help women cope with hair loss. Her "Comfort Program" is designed to support women before, during and after cancer treatment. She suggests that you explore the opportunities of hair

replacement before you start treatment so that you can be fitted with a wig that matches your hair in texture, colour and style.

Amalia offers a free, no-obligation consultation at Truly You, as do any of the Capila Hair Solution Centres. Visit www.trulyyou.ca or call toll-free 1-866-605-9447.

It is difficult to combat cancer, but know that there are people who have the experience to help you. Since one in nine Canadian women are expected to develop breast cancer during their lifetime, it is important that women know there are resources to help you understand and cope as you deal with this health challenge. The Canadian Cancer Society and Look Good Feel Better are just two of many that can help give you the answers you need. I am confident that the women I have listed above will do their utmost to help anyone who reaches out to them. Knowledge is power. Empower yourself by asking questions and getting your answers.

"Wardrobe Doctor" Marilyn Wetston is the owner of Marilyn's in Toronto's fashion district, the host of a weekly radio program and the author of columns helping people with their fashion dilemmas. Visit her site at MarilynWetston.com.

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