



The Hong Kong Breast Cancer Foundation's Pink Walk 2023 fundraiser

Eliza Fok

Spreading awareness and supporting others

As chairman of the Hong Kong Breast Cancer Foundation (HKBCF), which she co-founded in 2005, Dr Eliza Fok's accomplishments in the fight against the disease are almost too many to mention. However, her passion for the cause is personal, as she battled and survived breast cancer herself.

"I was diagnosed with breast cancer before my 50th birthday," Fok reveals, though that doesn't mean younger women shouldn't be worried. "There's been a dramatic increase in cases among young adults in recent years – some are in their late teens and early twenties," she warns. Like many patients, she first noticed irregularities and recognised symptoms during a self-examination. "I self-examine regularly and go for a mammogram every two years – fortunately, it was still in its early stages."

For Fok, "me-time" was one of the most important elements of her healing journey,

often taking walks and getting in touch with nature. She also believes its best to "accept it – don't be too proud or feel stigmatised. Instead, cherish the love and support of family and friends," she says. "You also need to trust your doctor and medical team. Try entering each day of your treatment and recovery process with a positive attitude.

"Knowing I wasn't alone in this journey, that there were others fighting breast cancer and sharing the experience, also gave me solace, courage and hope." And that's where the Hong Kong Breast Cancer Foundation comes in. "It's been providing consultations, assigning dedicated nurses for patients to talk, providing information, guidance and support for 20 years," says Fok. "Through the Foundation, you get to know and connect with other breast cancer patients. The different support groups and activities equip you with much-needed positive energy, and it fosters a great sense of community."



Like most people fighting breast cancer, Fok learned some valuable lessons along the way – most importantly, that it's not a death sentence. "I wish I'd known that, if detected early, breast cancer is often curable," she admits. "There are many misleading misconceptions surrounding the ordeal. Breast cancer doesn't equate to death. And you'll survive chemo. Your hair will grow back. You can choose to have breast reconstruction, if that's the journey you want to take. Most importantly, however, you're not alone. You're never alone, except when you choose to be."

Since beating the disease, Fok's priorities in life have understandably shifted dramatically. These days, it's her loved ones who take centre stage, above all. "My priority is quality time with others – my husband, my extended family and the people that matter," she says. "That's what's truly important. I treasure everything. I count my blessings and rejoice in being alive."

What's also important to Fok is spreading awareness and offering support to those battling breast cancer. Her message to women who are fighting the disease? "It's not the end of the world, especially when detected early," she says. "It's the beginning of a new life, a different life, but you're not alone in the battle. Your family, friends, doctors, nurses and fellow survivors are all here for you. Organisations like Hong Kong Breast Cancer Foundation, dedicated to mitigating the threat of breast cancer in the community, are here for you."

And for those who aren't, Fok's message is equally clear: "Early detection saves lives, so get tested regularly." 📌