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Can Women Get Pregnant After Being Treated for Breast Cancer?

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- an increasingly common question, 15% of patients with breast cancer are below the age of 40
- more early diagnosis of Breast CA
- more women delaying childbearing
- a quality of life question for long term survivors

Answer: Yes, you will not change your prognosis.

Facts:

- 5 year survival for localized breast cancer has risen to 91% due to advances in diagnosis and treatment
- >7% of fertile women have pregnancies after treatment for breast CA and 75% are within the first 5 years
- There is controversy regarding whether or not to wait two years after completion of chemotherapy before getting pregnant. Some investigators recommend waiting two years since the risk of recurrence is highest in the first two years after a mastectomy. Data from actual patients showed no adverse effect on survival.
- There are over 60 articles published regarding studies on pregnancy after breast CA and they all state that pregnancy is not contraindicated.
- Stage for stage pregnancy has no effect on a woman's survival rate after breast cancer regardless of receptor status.
- Stage for stages studies show that pregnancy after mastectomy has little influence on the disease and several studies even suggested pregnancy was protective against recurrence.
- Conception 2 to 104 months after completion of chemotherapy showed no excess in genetic disorders.

- Survivors need to talk to OB/GYN about fertility issues: chemotherapy and menopause, advancing age, freezing embryos and adoption Breastfeeding is recommended: there is no tumor virus going to the baby. Breast radiation reduces milk production and makes any mastitis harder to treat Pregnancy and parenthood is one of the most powerful life affirming acts.

Myths:

- pregnancy associated with breast CA is more aggressive
- you cannot test for breast cancer in pregnant patients
- general anesthesia is unsafe in pregnancy
- chemotherapy is contraindicated in pregnant women
- pregnancy termination improves prognosis
- breast CA metastasizes to the fetus
- pregnancy after treating breast CA is contraindicated