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## Change Your Brush and Help Fight Breast Cancer

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### Breast Cancer Heroines

#### Olivia Newton-John

**When singer/actress Olivia Newton-John was told she had breast cancer, like most women who are diagnosed with the disease, she was devastated. "It was all so overwhelming," she told [Women's Wire](#) in October last year.**

It was 1992 when Olivia was first diagnosed. Her father died from cancer that same weekend, a friend's child had died from a rare form of childhood cancer, and a close friend was already going through chemotherapy. Suddenly, cancer was overtaking the star's life.

"I remember waking up in the middle of the night in a cold sweat with this feeling of absolute dread, as if death were sitting right on my shoulder," she said.

Now, after a radical mastectomy, breast reconstruction, a year of treatment, and six years of living cancer-free, Olivia Newton-John has beaten back the dread. She's won the battle.

#### Multi-Faceted Career

Well known throughout the world for her music, movies, and retail outlets, Olivia first caught the public's attention in 1971 with a hit of Bob Dylan's "If Not For You". She rapidly ascended into stardom with hit albums, several Grammys, a long list of other awards, and a host of popular films including the immensely successful "Grease".

But more success was still to come. Her 1981 album "Physical" sold millions of copies, with the title-track spending weeks at number-one on the U.S. charts.

In 1983 she opened a retail store called KOALA Blue which stood for Korner Of Australia in Los Angeles. The popular store which sold merchandise from her home-country, Australia, was soon expanding around the U.S. and world. However, success didn't last, and in 1991, Olivia filed for bankruptcy.

This began a difficult time for the singer. She'd put her singing career on the back-burner to concentrate on being a mother and expanding her store, and the few albums she'd released weren't huge successes. The culmination came in July 1992 when, just before returning to Australia to see her father for the last time, she discovered a lump and had a biopsy. She was told she had breast cancer on the day he died.

#### Fighting The Battle of a Lifetime

Despite her utter devastation, Olivia found inspiration from friends and prepared herself to face the disease head on.

"I decided I could either fight this thing or I could just curl up and die," she said. "I made the

decision—right there [at the hospital]—that I was going to survive. I found an inner strength and resolve I never knew I had before."

And survive she did. Although the following year was probably one of the most traumatic periods in her life, she came through the radical surgery and chemotherapy with optimism and hope. In 1994, she reflected upon some of her experiences in her very personal album, "Gaia". Her husband supported her throughout treatment, however, the couple amicably split and eventually divorced in 1995.

#### PINK FACT.

In the U.S. a woman is diagnosed with breast cancer every three minutes.

At first, Olivia was reluctant to speak publicly about her ordeal. She wanted to shield her daughter, Chloe, who'd already lost a close friend to cancer. But when somebody told Chloe the truth, Olivia realized that it would be okay to talk about it. She began speaking at fundraising events, such as [Race for the Cure](#)™, reminding women that educating themselves about the disease and early diagnosis are key to survival.

"There is so much fear out there, and so little information," Olivia said. "I want to change that."

### A New Outlook

Now Olivia Newton John lives life with renewed vigor. Her recently released album "Back With a Heart" has her thinking about doing her first U.S. tour since "Physical".

"In some ways, the breast cancer was one of the best things that ever happened to me," she recently told the [LA Times](#). "I know that sounds weird. But it made me appreciate everything a lot more ... just being alive and waking up."

[Read more about Olivia's fight with breast cancer.](#)

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