

# Breast cancer survivors get fresh start with fitness plan [Eire Region Edition 2]

Vousden, Petrina. *Daily Mail* [London (UK)] 12 Sep 2011: 25.

BREAST cancer survivors who went through a specially designed exercise programme have reported a fresh outlook on life with greatly improved stamina and a new feeling of physical wellbeing.

A total of 48 women ranging in age from 36 to 72 took part in the four-month project, which included cardiovascular and resistance training.

The Irish Cancer Society programme is based on research which shows the risk of breast cancer recurrence can be halved with the help of 30 minutes exercise a day.

Mairead Lyons, head of services at the Society, said: 'The results from this pilot study have totally surpassed our expectations. There were no adverse events. In fact the physical well-being, emotional wellbeing and overall quality of life of the participants improved greatly.'

Following its success, the Society is now considering extending the programme outside Dublin. The women took a fitness test which included a one-mile time trial, and each participant received a personalised training schedule.

They were monitored on a weekly basis and the intensity of their training was assessed and increased every three weeks. The results of the programme, designed by exercise specialist Marie Murphy, showed that overall fitness within the group improved significantly.

Highlights included: the average time it took the women to walk one mile improved from 13.30 minutes in week one to 12.23 minutes in week 15; body fat levels fell from 33.7 per cent in week one to 31.7 per cent in week 15, and the total weight the women lifted went up ninefold by week 12.

At the end of training three quarters of the women said they were satisfied or very satisfied with their health, while almost seven out of ten felt their fitness had improved.

As well as the physical benefits, the improvements reported in quality of life were very positive.

Some women said they were now able to spend more time playing with children and grandchildren and also talked of being more positive in their outlook.

It is estimated that women in Ireland have a one in ten chance of developing breast cancer. However, they can improve their resistance to the disease by up to 42 per cent by being more active, drinking less alcohol and improving their diet.

'I CAN PICK UP MY CHILDREN AGAIN'

JOANNE RAFTERY never thought she would be able to lift her two children again after breast cancer surgery.

But her life changed completely when she began the Irish Cancer Society's exercise programme.

Mrs Raftery was diagnosed with breast Cancer at St Vincent's Hospital in February 2010 and had a tumour removed.

She said: 'I have a seven-year-old and a five-year-old, Jos and Lauren.

'I remember after the surgery I wasn't able to pick them up. That was the hardest thing for me. I couldn't even carry them upstairs to bed.' The teacher, from Arklow, Co. Wicklow, said exercise specialist Marie Murphy proved to be her 'guardian angel'.

She said: 'She is an absolutely fantastic woman. It was just unbelievable.

'I didn't really notice a difference at first. But seven weeks into the programme Lauren fell. Instinctively, I scooped her up in my arms. I hadn't even realised I had done it.'

Mrs Raftery now exercises regularly and completed the women's mini-marathon earlier this year.

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