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Media Release

Bath mum urges younger women to check their breasts this Breast Cancer Awareness Month

A Bath mum of two is urging younger women to remember to check their breasts after finding a cancerous lump while breastfeeding her baby.

Jessica Parsons, 36, has been cared for at the Royal United Hospitals Bath (RUH) NHS Foundation Trust since being diagnosed with cancer in June.

She was diagnosed with metaplastic squamous cell carcinoma, a rare type of breast cancer accounting for less than 2% of breast cancers.

Now, as Jessica comes to the end of six rounds of chemotherapy during October's Breast Cancer Awareness Month, she is spreading the message that it is important to check your breasts no matter what your age.

Jessica, who was on maternity leave from her job in human resources when she was diagnosed, said: "I found the lump when breastfeeding my daughter Inès, who was then nearly 7 months old. I had also breastfed my son Stanley, so I knew that your breasts could change and feel a bit different. I thought it could be a blocked milk duct. But, after two days, I went to my GP and was promptly referred to the RUH.

"To be told I had cancer was a massive shock. I never thought of myself as untouchable but I was young, fit, and lived a healthy life.

"Once I'd started to come to terms with the news, I felt determined to stay positive and take things one day at a time."

After chemotherapy, Jessica will undergo surgery at the RUH later this year to have a mastectomy, before radiotherapy treatment in the new year.

She has been documenting her treatment so far on her new Instagram account @life_lemons_and_my_melons.

Jessica added: “The care I have received at the RUH has been exceptional. I feel like I can really trust the team caring for me, which makes a very difficult situation feel so much easier.

“I set up my Instagram account to share updates about how I am, but also to spread the word that it’s so important to know your body and check yourself regularly – and that includes men too.

“It’s really uncommon to have breast cancer when you’re under 40, but I’m proof that it can happen. I know it can feel scary, because what if you find something? But, it’s better to know so you can get it checked as soon as possible.”

RUH Consultant Surgeon Jamie McIntosh said: “One in five breast cancers is in women before they reach the menopause, and we have seen the number of younger women being diagnosed increase in the last 10 years.

“That’s why it’s really important to be aware of any changes. This includes lumps but also, especially in younger women, things like changes to skin texture, change in breast shape or a feeling of thickening rather than a distinct lump.

“The good news is that there are some amazing things happening in breast cancer research and treatment development, including many new treatments that are really specifically targeted to the type of breast cancer a patient has.

“For many people finding a lump won’t mean they have cancer, but if it does our team is here to look after you every step of the way.”

For information and tips on how to check your breasts, see the [CoppaFeel! website](#).

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Notes to Editor:

At the RUH we’re proud to put people at the heart of what we do, striving to create an environment where everyone matters. Everyone means the people we care for, the people we work with and the people in our community.

We provide a wide range of services including medicine and surgery, services for women and children, accident and emergency services, and diagnostic and clinical support services.

We also provide specialist services for rheumatology, chronic pain and chronic fatigue syndrome/ME via the Royal National Hospital for Rheumatic Diseases which we acquired in 2015.

In 2021, we acquired Sulis Hospital Bath, an independent hospital that provides care for both private and NHS patients. This has enabled us to provide more care for NHS patients, as well as continuing to provide private care to those who choose it. Any additional income earned through private care is reinvested in services for the benefit of the people we care for at both Sulis and the RUH.



Royal United Hospitals Bath

NHS Foundation Trust

We're currently building a new Cancer Centre at the RUH. The Dyson Cancer Centre, which is set to open in autumn 2023, will help transform the care we provide for patients, families and carers.

We work closely with other health and care organisations as members of the Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire Integrated Care Board. We strive to improve the health and wellbeing of the people in our community by working together build one of the healthiest places to live and work.

We are rated 'Good' by the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

For more information about the Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust visit: www.ruh.nhs.uk