



ABREAST IN A BOAT - FACT SHEET

Breast cancer is the leading killer of women aged 35 to 54, with more than 20,000 Canadian women diagnosed each year. Breast cancer can also occur in men, but it is rare.

Medical advice used to suggest that women who had breast surgery limit physical activities, particularly repetitive upper body movements (e.g. cross-country skiing and canoeing) so as to not develop lymphedema, a painful and incapacitating swelling of the arm and chest area that can develop any time after breast surgery. This advice affected both the quality and enjoyment of life for many women.

Abreast In A Boat was launched in 1996 as a research project to dispel the myth that women who have undergone breast cancer treatment should refrain from repetitive, upper body exercise. None of the original 24 team members developed lymphedema as a result of paddling.

An international movement:

- *Abreast In A Boat* was the world's first breast cancer dragon boat team. It has since grown to five crews in Metro Vancouver, Canada and has inspired the formation of more than 150 teams around the world.
- *Abreast In A Boat* has paddled in world-class festivals in New Zealand, the United States, Italy, Poland and South Africa. A crew also raced in Singapore to support the first breast cancer dragon boat team in Asia.
- Each year in Vancouver, breast cancer dragon boat teams are recognized in the Scotiabank Breast Cancer Challenge Race. The race ends with the moving Flower Ceremony, with carnations cast into the water in memory of those no longer with us.
- In 2005, *Abreast In A Boat* hosted the first international breast cancer survivor dragon boat regatta in celebration of our 10th paddling season. More than 2,000 paddlers (all living with breast cancer) took part in the Ten Years Abreast Celebration.
- *Abreast In A Boat* participated in the second International breast cancer dragon boat regatta in Australia and were proud to participate in the third international festival in Peterborough, Ontario, Canada.

We participate in *Abreast In A Boat* to make a difference – to raise awareness about breast cancer and to encourage those living with breast cancer to live full and active lives. A non-profit society, our goal is to send a message of hope to people living with this disease and to those who support them.

For more information visit www.abreastinaboat.com