

Suzanne Somers Fought Breast Cancer for 23 Years Before Death

Actress Suzanne Somers, 76, rejected chemo and wrote a book about it in 2009, raising concerns of cancer advocates.

October 18, 2023 By Laura Schmidt

Actress Suzanne Somers had breast cancer for more than two decades before her death on Sunday, October 15, just one day before her 77th birthday. She also had skin cancer and a precancerous condition in her uterus, according to [Today](#).

"Her family was gathered to celebrate her 77th birthday on October 16th. Instead, they will celebrate her extraordinary life and want to thank her millions of fans and followers who loved her dearly," Somers's longtime publicist, Couri Hay, said in a [statement to NBC News](#) on behalf of Somers's family.



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A post shared by Suzanne Somers (@suzannesomers)

The Three's Company actress and ThighMaster creator first went public with her breast cancer diagnosis in 2000. She had a lumpectomy and radiation but declined chemotherapy. In fact, in 2009, she published Knockout, a book that questioned chemo's appropriateness as treatment for many common cancers, including breast and lung cancers, [reported NBC News at the time](#).

Her viewpoints, which received considerable publicity, raised the concerns of the American Cancer Society.

[Misinformation regarding cancer](#) isn't new, but it has spread more broadly in recent years, according to a review published in [Oncology Practice](#) last year.

Earlier this year, Somers announced via [Instagram](#) that her breast cancer had returned but that she was again cancer-free.



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A post shared by Suzanne Somers (@suzannesomers)

Somers dealt with numerous health issues throughout her life. In a [2020 interview with CBS News Los Angeles](#), Somers revealed that she “had cancer three times” while playing Chrissy on Three's Company in the 1970s. “They call it severe hyperplasia in your uterus. I didn't make a big deal about it,” Somers told CBS News.

In the same interview, she shared that she had had malignant melanoma, a skin cancer, in her back while in her 30s.

A private family burial will take place this week, and a memorial will be held next month, according to a statement from her family.

In a final birthday card for her grandmother, Violet Somers shared kind words about her “Zannie.”



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A post shared by V I O L E T (@violetsomers)

Somers’s husband of 46 years, Alan Hamel, also shared a post honoring his late wife.



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To read a collection of articles on this topic, click [#Breast Cancer](#), and for more information, check out Cancer Health's [Basics on Breast Cancer](#). It reads in part:

What is breast cancer?

Cancer develops in breast tissue when cells grow out of control. Malignant cells can form a tumor that may be visible on mammograms or felt as a lump.

Breast cancer is easier to treat than many other cancers, and early detection and treatment improves outcomes. But if cancer is diagnosed after it has spread elsewhere in the body, it is harder to treat and the likelihood of survival is lower.

Who gets breast cancer?

Breast cancer is the second most common cancer among women, after skin cancer. Nearly 300,000 women are diagnosed with invasive cancer annually, according to the American Cancer Society. Men can also develop breast cancer, but this is rare. People with [BRCA mutations](#) are at high risk for breast cancer.

Around a quarter of women with early breast cancer will go on to develop metastatic disease. About 15% of breast cancer patients have hard-to-treat triple-negative breast cancer, or TNBC, which is more common among young women and Black women.

How is breast cancer treated?

Treatment for breast cancer depends on how advanced the cancer is when it is detected, including how many tumors there are, how large they are and whether they have spread to nearby lymph nodes or other parts of the body.

Treatment can be broken down into local and systemic therapies. Local therapies, such as surgery and radiation, treat cancer in the breast. Systemic treatments, which can reach cancer cells that have spread elsewhere in the body, typically cause more side effects.

