

heartbeat

The best health advice for you and your family

OUR HEALTH SOS

'We're doing it for Sue'

Our sister had breast cancer three times. So now we decided to volunteer our help

From Ruth Day, 67, of Station Road, Manningtree, Essex



Sue, Mary and Ruth

I sat on the sofa with my partner David and took a deep breath. 'It's back,' I said simply. 'Poor Sue...'

'It' was breast cancer. My sister Sue had first had it at 37, then again at 45. Now, 14 years on, it was back for a third time.

On the previous occasions Sue had lumpectomies and radiotherapy, and had lymph nodes removed.

We'd all hoped that would be the end of it.

But now it was back. 'The doctors say I should have the breast removed,' she told me. 'I'm opting for a double mastectomy.'

It was drastic but I understood. Sue had been through enough. This way we hoped the cancer would never come back.

Sue had her operation. Her family took care of her and our sister Mary and I were at the end of the

phone whenever she needed us.

Breast cancer had been part of our lives for as long as we could remember.

It was drastic but I understood

Two maternal aunts had suffered from it, and David's sister had had it too.

I'd set up a support group called Bosom Pals for people affected by breast cancer, and had run the Race For Life twice.

Mary and I had also taken part in a tamoxifen drug trial for five years. It was part of the International Breast Cancer Intervention Study (IBIS).

Each day we had taken a pill and we'd had regular mammograms to see if the drug had prevented us from getting the same illness as Sue.

'I just wish we

could do more to help,' I said.

One day Mary heard about a second drug trial known as IBIS-II. It was a similar worldwide trial, only this time using a drug called anastrozole.

Volunteers were needed and with our family history, we were both eligible to take part.

Mary didn't hesitate. 'I'm going to

volunteer again,' she said.

A year later I followed. After mammograms and bone-density scans, we started taking a pill once a day.

We didn't know if it was the real drug or a placebo. But that wasn't important.

What mattered was doing something to help find a way of protecting women from a disease that had plagued our family for years.

Now Mary and I take our pill each day and we have annual mammograms.

Sue is doing well but she still has difficult days.

Mary and I couldn't magic Sue's cancer away. But we can do something constructive in her honour and help researchers try to find a treatment to help those at high risk of breast cancer.



Ruth with her niece Becky

IBIS-II — CAN YOU HELP?

What is it? IBIS-II is a study funded by Cancer Research UK into whether the drug anastrozole can prevent breast cancer in women at high risk.

So far over 6000 women from all over the world have joined IBIS-II, but more are needed to make the results as reliable as possible.

Who can volunteer? The trial is open to postmenopausal women aged 40 to 70 who have a family history of the disease or have previously had benign breast lumps. Women who have had cancer or are taking HRT are not eligible.

What do you need to do? Volunteers will be asked to take one tablet every day for five years. The tablet will be either anastrozole or a placebo (a dummy tablet).

Where can I find out more? More than 50 IBIS-II centres across the UK are open until the end of December this year. Go to ibis-trials.org or call 0800 111 4134.



The IBIS-II website

Take a Break is proud to support Breast Cancer Campaign, which funds research to save lives and find a cure for breast cancer. To be part of the search for a cure this October, visit breastcancercampaign.org

TURN OVER FOR: THINK THIN TO LOSE WEIGHT + DR KNOTT DIRECT + HOW TO ENJOY LIFE MORE