Lucy Liu's Cancer Misdiagnosis Inspires Her to Promote Pfizer's Early Screening Campaign

After a wrongful cancer diagnosis and unnecessary surgery, actress Lucy Liu encourages regular screening for early cancer detection.

April 14, 2026 By Eva Lorenz

Actress Lucy Liu was misdiagnosed with cancer in the 1990s, leading to an unnecessary surgery. Today, the Charlie's Angels and Kill Bill star is working with pharmaceutical giant Pfizer on its "Every Breakthrough Matters" campaign to encourage people to advocate for themselves and emphasize the importance of early detection through cancer screening.

Specifically, the campaign, which includes commercials, social media posts, outdoor banners and more, drives folks to PfizerForAll.com/Screenings, a website that provides information about recommended cancer screenings.

"It's not about the fixing, it's about really understanding what screening is, and about information and advocacy. That's a really important thing," Liu told People magazine. "And even though there is so much available to us technologically, a lot of people don't do it because they don't want to know if something's wrong or they're too busy. But, as busy as you are, it's a lifesaving thing, because, oftentimes, it's caught too late, and at that point, you're basically scrambling to figure out what your resources are."

Liu, now age 57, found a lump in one of her breasts in the '90s; her doctor subsequently also felt the lump, said it was cancer and immediately scheduled a surgery for its removal—without follow-up tests, including an ultrasound or a mammogram, according to Liu. After undergoing surgery, Liu learned the lump was noncancerous.

Breast cancer is the second most common form of cancer (behind skin cancer) and the second leading cause of cancer death (behind lung cancer) for women, according to the American Cancer Society (ACS). Breast self-exams are one way to check for lumps or skin changes at home, and

most health care associations recommend performing one monthly. However, self-exams should not replace regular breast screenings by a health care provider.

Cancer is difficult to treat at advanced stages, and regular screening often leads to earlier detection. Depending on their risk factors, some people may require cancer screenings earlier than others, which is why talking to one's health care provider is essential. The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, ACS and other professional organizations update screening guidelines based on the latest research; learn more in Cancer Health's "Cancer Screening Guidelines."

"I want [cancer screening] to be part of [people's] regular regimen," Liu told People. "This is something you do just once or twice a year for yourself, and it is really critical."

Liu, who will appear in the upcoming Devil Wears Prada 2, announced her partnership with Pfizer this month through an Instagram post which reads:

> "April is National Cancer Prevention and Early Detection Month. Cancer has shaped my life in both the time we've gained and the time we've lost, and that's why this matters to me.
>
> Early detection is key. Talk to your doctor and schedule your cancer screenings at PfizerForAll.com/Screenings. @pfizerforall #PfizerPartner"

View this post on Instagram

A post shared by Lucy Liu (@lucyliu)

On World Cancer Day, February 4, Pfizer debuted its commercial for “Every Breakthrough Matters.” The ad features the “life’s game of inches” motivational speech given by football coach Tony D’Amato as portrayed by Al Pacino in the film Any Given Sunday.

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