Tennis Star Chris Evert Is Cancer-Free, Again

Chris Evert says advances in genetic testing improved her chance of survival.

July 10, 2024 By Laura Schmidt

Tennis Hall of Famer Chris Evert's ovarian cancer came back but that didn't stop her from remaining active in the sports world and beyond, The New York Times reports.

Evert, 69, who was ranked No. 1 in singles tennis for seven years in the '70s and early '80s, was first diagnosed with early-stage ovarian cancer in 2021. She shared her diagnosis to raise awareness of ovarian cancer and encourage early testing.

Ovarian cancer will affect nearly 19,700 U.S. women this year, according to the American Cancer Society. Evert's early diagnosis was particularly remarkable because ovarian cancer most often goes unnoticed until later stages. In fact, 70% to 80% of ovarian cancer is diagnosed at Stages III or IV, according to the MD Anderson Cancer Center.

Evert lost her sister Jeanne Evert Dubin to ovarian cancer in 2020. But that tragedy may have saved Evert's life, as Cancer Health reported in 2022.

When Dubin was diagnosed in 2017, she tested negative for the harmful variants of the BRCA1 gene that were associated with cancer, so Evert and other family members were discouraged from undergoing genetic tests. But recent advances in genetic testing have since identified Dubin's specific variant as a genetic risk factor.

When Evert had her blood tested in October 2021, she, too, had that BRCA1 variant.

In December 2021, Evert underwent a preventive hysterectomy, but post-surgery pathology revealed a tumor in her fallopian tubes. Further surgery revealed no lymph node involvement; her Stage I ovarian cancer had been removed during the original surgery.

A little more than a year after being in remission, Evert underwent a cautionary CT scan. In December 2023, Evert announced that her cancer had returned.

“Doctors are always hopeful,” she told the Times. “Obviously, if something returned the second time, there’s more of a chance that it’s going to return. Some people have cancer once and it goes away, and they live for 30 or 40 more years. That’s a wonderful story. It’s not always like that. But my doctor told me I won’t die from this.”

Evert was diagnosed with Stage I ovarian cancer again, meaning it had not spread.

After undergoing another course of treatment, including chemotherapy and surgery, Evert is seemingly cancer-free again and eager to return to work as a tennis commentator, coach and charitable fundraiser, the Times reports.

“You can’t live in fear,” she said. “I just have to keep exercising, try and be as healthy as I can and be up on all my CT scans and my appointments with the doctor.”

As a tennis star, Evert isn’t alone in her battle. Last year, Cancer Health reported on tennis legend Martina Navratilova’s Stage I throat cancer diagnosis as well as an unrelated breast cancer diagnosis.

The breast cancer was discovered while she was undergoing exams for her throat cancer. Navratilova’s throat cancer is associated with the human papillomavirus (HPV) and is one of the more treatable cancers.

“This double whammy is serious but still fixable, and I’m hoping for a favorable outcome,” Navratilova, 66, said. “It’s going to stink for a while, but I’ll fight with all I have got.”

In related news, actress Olivia Munn recently disclosed her breast cancer diagnosis and thanked doctors for using a breast cancer risk assessment tool (BCRAT) that helped lead to an early diagnosis.

Developed in 1989, BCRAT is a questionnaire that uses a woman’s personal information to estimate her risk of developing invasive breast cancer within the next five years and within her

lifetime, according to the National Cancer Institute.

To read more about Evert's type of cancer, click #Ovarian Cancer or read Cancer Health's Basics on Ovarian Cancer. It reads in part:

> Who gets ovarian cancer?
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> Ovarian cancer can occur in women as young as 15, but most cases are diagnosed in women older than 55. Ovarian cancer is more common among white women, followed by Hispanic women, than it is in African-American or Asian women; however, it is declining in all groups.
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> What are the risk factors for ovarian cancer?
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> Risk factors for developing ovarian cancer include obesity, family history, inherited genetic mutations, such as BRCA1 and BRCA2, never having been pregnant and long-term use of fertility drugs. Postmenopausal hormone replacement therapy is associated with a greater risk of ovarian cancer, while oral contraceptives are protective.
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> How is ovarian cancer diagnosed?
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> Early detection and treatment of cancer increases the likelihood of long-term survival. But ovarian cancer sometimes takes a while to diagnose because of the need to rule out other medical conditions. Diagnosis starts with a physical exam and health history. A doctor may conduct a pelvic exam, which is a manual internal exam of the vagina or rectum to feel for lumps.
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> Blood may be tested for the CA-125 protein, which is elevated in many women with ovarian cancer. A transvaginal ultrasound scan may be used to look for growths in the ovaries, fallopian tubes and uterus. X-rays, computed tomography or MRI scans may be done to see how much cancer has spread. A laparoscopy (insertion of a thin tube through a small cut in the belly) may be used to get a look at the inside of the abdomen and a small tissue sample (a biopsy) may be removed for examination in a laboratory.

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