

Stay Healthy

HOUSE
CALL

Q: Should I get a personal health record?

A personal health record (PHR) lets you store all of your medical information online; you may be able to set one up through your employer, your insurer, or an independent site like WebMD or HealthVault. From a medical standpoint, it's a good idea to have one, especially if you suffer from a complex condition. PHRs aggregate all of your health history, making critical information available to every doctor who's treating you. Talk to your physician and your insurance company about whether they can feed your data into a PHR. To help avoid security breaches, choose a strong password, and don't share it with others.

—Dr. Glen Stream, president of the American Academy of Family Physicians

BY THE NUMBERS

3,400

THE NUMBER OF AMERICANS (MOSTLY KIDS) WHO SWALLOWED LITHIUM BATTERIES, COMMONLY USED IN MINI REMOTE CONTROLS, LAST YEAR. IF INGESTED, THE BATTERIES CAN CAUSE SERIOUS INJURY OR EVEN DEATH. FOR MORE INFO, GO TO THEBATTERYCONTROLLED.COM.

Source: The National Capital Poison Center

HEALTH HERO: NANCY CAPPELLO

Fighting for Women

How a breast ultrasound saved her life

Two months after receiving a normal mammogram result in 2003, Nancy M. Cappello was diagnosed with Stage 3c breast cancer after her physician detected an abnormality during a routine exam. Cappello was stunned—she'd had 11 years of clear screenings, yet her breast surgeon estimated that the cancer had been growing for four to five years. The surgeon said that it had likely been missed because she had dense breast tissue, which made tumors hard to detect.

Cappello learned that while 40 percent of women have dense breasts, fewer than one in 10 are aware of it. For women with dense breast tissue, the risk of developing cancer is four to

six times greater, yet digital mammograms are only 60 percent accurate in detecting tumors in these patients. But "when women with dense breasts supplement their yearly mammogram with an ultrasound, the combined

I HAD ONLY
A COIN TOSS
CHANCE OF
FINDING CANCER."



screenings detect cancer 97 percent of the time," says Cappello. "I did everything I was told but had a coin toss chance of finding cancer."

Determined to put the word out, Cappello launched a nonprofit, Are You DENSE (areyoudense.org), to educate women about breast density. She and her husband, Joe, also worked to initiate state legislation requiring doctors to make sure patients are informed of their breast density risk. So far, laws have been passed in Connecticut and Texas, and at press time bills are pending in California and New York. A federal bill is in the draft phase.

"Nancy is the first person to make this issue known," says Dr. Thomas Kolb, a New York radiologist who has pioneered research on breast density. "These women deserve to be told that they are at increased risk, and that they can do something about it."
—Dana Hudepohl

PHOTO: ROCCO GUERRERA