

BEATING BREAST CANCER:

ONE IN EIGHT WOMEN WORLD-WIDE WILL BE DIAGNOSED WITH BREAST CANCER

during their lifetime. Charlotte Pedersen tells *Grazia* why she refused to let her illness win



“I was determined that cancer wouldn't kill me or take over my life”

“WE HAVE A SAYING IN DENMARK: FORTY, FAT AND FINISHED. It couldn't have applied to me more. A year ago, I was really enjoying life. I was looking forward to 2009 as I was going to be turning 40, and my husband Michael and I were going to be celebrating our tenth wedding anniversary. We moved to Bahrain six years ago from Denmark, with our two children, Frederik, eight, and Anne-Catrine, six. We really were having the time of our lives. At the time, I'd have described myself as an easy-going, content person. Life was simple – I just wanted everyone around me to be happy.

Thinking back about my health, I suppose the only thing which was a bit unusual was that last October I started to lose a lot of hair – each day almost a handful was coming out. I put it down to the stress of the credit crunch. But when I went back to Denmark in December my mum noticed something wasn't right and she encouraged me to check it out.

When I returned to Bahrain, the doctor couldn't find anything wrong. Funnily enough, I happened to bump

into my old gynaecologist, and she suggested I go and visit her. On January 4, she gave me a full check-up and found a small lump the size of a pea in my breast.

She explained to me that it could be anything – possibly some scar tissue from breast reduction surgery I'd had in 1992 – but she recommended that I have it examined, especially taking my age into consideration.

I wasn't worried at all. I'd had small water cysts in my breasts before, so I was sure it was just the same thing again. Plus, it was only six months since I'd had my last full check-up, when nothing had been found. There was no history of breast cancer in my family, so I didn't think I was remotely at risk.

So, five days later, I had a mammogram. The lump was actually the size of a date. I had an ultrasound straight away, followed by a biopsy. Strangely, I was still relatively unconcerned, but, when the results of the biopsy didn't come through on time, I started to feel anxious. I called the laboratory and they said they would email me the results that afternoon. I assumed that if they were emailing them to me rather than phoning or insisting I go to the clinic, then nothing could be wrong. I was so relieved, I went straight round to a friend's house and told her my good news.

I came home, made dinner, and then checked my emails, chatting with Michael at the same time. The report was there but was full of Latin medical terms that Michael had to Google to translate. When we managed to



“If I had just one piece of advice it would be **HAVE AN ANNUAL MAMMOGRAM.** Find a good doctor you can trust, and if you have any concerns please **DON'T IGNORE THEM.**”

Words: Danielle Simpson Photos: George Dipin

Bahrain resident Charlotte Pedersen, left and inset, has been given the all clear after a mastectomy, radiotherapy and chemo