

## Camilla Franks Is Removing Her Ovaries After Inheriting BRCA1 Gene Mutation

"It is in making this decision, that I have never felt more woman." - by Lucy Bode



Getty

12 months after Aussie designer Camilla Franks completed treatment for breast cancer, she's hit yet another speed bump on her journey to recovery: the new mum has learned she's inherited the BRCA1 gene mutation, requiring her ovaries be removed.

"Today marks the milestone of one-year post-treatment," the 43-year-old shared on Instagram. "I write to you today as a WOMAN. A woman who is proud, A woman who is fierce, A woman who is relieved and grateful, but above all – A woman who is alive."

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Today marks the milestone of one-year post treatment. I write to you today as a WOMAN. 🌸 A woman who is proud, A woman who is fierce, A woman who is relieved and grateful, but above all - A woman who is alive. 🌸 🌸 I set out to be transparent on my journey of survival. To share my experiences and stories for women who may have been walking the same treacherous path, but the following cards I kept close to my chest as I navigated the battlefield that was CANCER. 🌸

🌸 So, here it is.. 🌸 I was diagnosed with a rare form of breast cancer that was a result of BRCA1 gene mutation, something I didn't know I carried up until last year. Those carrying the gene have a 79% chance of developing breast cancer, while 44% of us will face ovarian cancer. After 6 months of what my doctors called the "bazooka" of intense chemotherapy, I had a double mastectomy and reconstruction. 🌸 🌸 This time was without a doubt, the most challenging time in my life - physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually and on this day, although my journey is not quite over, as I prepare to remove my ovaries in order to save my life. 🌸 🌸 It is in making this decision, that I have never felt more WOMAN. 🌸 🌸 xxC 🌸 #camillawithlove #breastcancerawarenessmonth

Camilla also explained that she had always intended to be transparent about the highs and lows following her diagnosis. "To share my experiences and stories for women who may have been walking the same treacherous path, but the following cards I kept close to my chest as I navigated the battlefield that was CANCER."

"So, here it is..." she continued. "I was diagnosed with a rare form of breast cancer that was a result of BRCA1 gene mutation, something I didn't know I carried up until last year. Those carrying the gene have a 79% chance of developing breast cancer, while 44% of us will face ovarian cancer. After 6 months of what my doctors called the "bazooka" of intense chemotherapy, I had a double mastectomy and reconstruction."

Camilla reflects on this period as "without a doubt" her most challenging time to date. "Physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually and on this day, although my journey is not quite over, as I prepare to remove my ovaries in order to save my life. It is in making this decision, that I have never felt more WOMAN."

In a series of follow up posts, she added: "This past year I have cried endless tears of fear, despair, confusion and helplessness. I have been robbed of things I will never know again. But at this milestone today, the tears I shed are of gratitude and pride."

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This past year I have cried endless tears of fear, despair, confusion and helplessness. 🙏🙏🙏 I have been robbed of things I will never know again. 🙏🙏 But at this milestone today, the tears I shed are of gratitude and pride. 🙏🙏 Tears of gratitude for my health team for their perseverance, wisdom and counsel. I pushed you as hard as you pushed me, but here we are, one year later and I have a lot to be thankful for. 🙏🙏 You have given me another shot of being a mummy and a wife and for that I'm eternally grateful, you have given me LIFE. 🙏🙏 My dream team 🙏 Oncologist, Dr. Elgene Lim from St Vincent's and the Garvan Research Institute. 🙏 Breast Surgeon, Dr. David Gordon-Thompson from the Prince of Wales Hospital. 🙏 Reconstructive Surgeon, Dr. David Caminer from St Vincent's. 🙏 Yoga, Nell Hoess from Nell Hoess Yoga. Naturopath, Tabitha McCintosh from Awaken your Health. And to the wonderful nurses at the Kinghorn Centre and Prince of Wales. 🙏🙏 Lastly, I am proud of myself. It was fucking wild, but I did it. Let my tears fall. I'm still here. 🙏🙏 xxC 🙏 #camillawithlove #breastcancerawarenessmonth

“For every person who has been touched by cancer, those who stand alongside a loved one, for those in the midst of their own battle or those who are left behind when a fight is lost.... know that you are not

alone. I hear you, I see you, I feel you and I love you. And where there is love, there is hope. And for that, you have to keep going."

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Lucy Bode

Lucy is Women Health's digital editor, social media specialist and the go-to girl for all things holistic wellness. Her background as a journalist and passion for food, fitness and integrative medicine has led her to write for some of Australia's leading publications over the course of her career.



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## Leisel Jones: The Second Chapter

How the Australian swimming champion found her balance - by Tara Ali

When former competitive swimmer Leisel Jones was growing up, she knew she wanted to do something different. At the time, she didn't know 'Olympian' was a title, but she didn't need to wait long to find out. "I never imagined I'd be the youngest person to make an Australian Olympic team at just 14," she says, looking back. "I was 15 at my first games."

Widely regarded as one of the best breaststrokers of all time, Leisel became the first Australian swimmer to compete in four consecutive Olympic Games; bringing home nine Olympic medals and earning her an OAM.

### **Pressure to perform**

During Leisel's competitive years, there were many highs – the wins and the new PBs, but there were also the lows of defeat and the pressure of relentless training, strict diet regimens, personal sacrifices and the constant scrutiny that comes with life as an elite athlete. "When you're training for an event as big as the Olympics, your every breathing moment is about the pool and that podium," she says. "When you have a pinpoint focus on winning gold or nothing, it can be challenging to find balance in life."

The result was a young woman with all the normal adolescent insecurities of a teen yet amplified by life under the spotlight. "I was a teenager growing up in the public eye," she recalls. "I struggled with the pressure and the attention. When I look back at the video footage, I was so little – just a young girl competing on the world stage."

## Starting a new chapter

Following her successful fourth Olympic Games in London in 2012, Leisel announced her retirement. "I had lost the love for swimming. It's a lot of hours in the pool and the gym to dedicate to one goal," she says. "I had broken world records, I had won medals, I had achieved everything I wanted to get out of the sport and that was the time when I knew I was ready to move on."

Like many professional athletes, however, Leisel initially found adjusting back to normal life to be a challenge. "Life outside of sport is so different," she points out. "Your day isn't as structured any more, it doesn't revolve around training and that's where life gets in the way." Without the rigid discipline of sport, Leisel found herself slipping into a mindset of self-doubt and habits that left her feeling negative and sluggish.

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## Finding the balance

As she adjusted to her new life, Leisel found herself questioning how she wanted her next chapter to look, which helped her to move forward. "I had to reimagine my life," she says. "Who am I now? What do I want? And really, it was quite simple. It's about balance."

Today, by embracing a holistic mind and body approach, Leisel has found a new way to embrace life. "I've realised that the thoughts we think affect our body every single day. So, it's about working the body to feel well and healthy, and to celebrate what the body can do." By practising mindfulness and working towards feeling more present in every part of her day, Leisel says she's living a more balanced life, with happiness at the heart of it.

Still working in sport, which she says will always be her passion, Leisel wants to share her own experiences to mentor young people by helping them to find their balance as well as make positive, healthy choices that will enhance their lives. She has also recently become an ambassador for FatBlaster clinical shakes, which she includes in her own daily nutrition.

"I'm still on my own journey," Leisel says. "There's no finish line. I'm always trying to improve and do better, and that's something I'm learning every day."

For tips on curbing hunger click here.

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Tara Ali

Tara Ali is a writer who loves vegetarian food and '90s R&B. She has recently returned to exercise after two babies in two years. Turns out YouTube workouts combined with peeling children off your back is a pretty decent calorie burn.



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