Mark Froestad — TC and IVF

Matt Froestad has survived testicular cancer twice and now looks forward to fatherhood.

January 6, 2022 By Justin Birckbichler

Welcome to the Band of Ballers! In this series on ABSOT, I'm turning over control to some other ballsy testicular cancer survivors and patients who have inspired me with their work in advocacy and awareness during and after their diagnosis. This month's feature is all about Matt Froestad, who shares his story about IVF after two testicular cancer diagnoses. Enjoy!

I have a cancer story. It's not a "tilt your head and say awwww" kind of story or one about intense treatment with chemotherapy. By looking at me you would never know I had cancer, that is unless you saw me naked. No, I didn't lose my hair or spend countless days in the hospital, but I do have a cancer story.

It started in the fall of 2009.

I was away at college for my first semester and happened to be taking biology 101. That week in lecture we were learning about cancers and how they impact the body—breast cancer, blood cancer, lung cancer, and even testicular cancer. It's that last one that gave me pause and reminded me of conversations I had with my stepdad, growing up about the importance of checking yourself regularly to make sure everything felt normal down there. I probably didn't check as often as I should, and that biology lecture was like an alarm clock going off that I hit snooze multiple times.

Later that night while in the shower I decided to do a self-exam. I felt something. It was a bump on my right testicle. Something I had never felt before. I brushed it off and convinced myself I was overthinking it. After all we JUST talked about it in class—I must be being a hypochondriac.

The weekend went by, and I checked again. Sure, enough the lump was still there. I got out of the shower and went to my bio lab. When I got there, I saw a note on the door saying class was canceled.

I can't remember the reason, but I took it as a sign to get my situation checked out.

I called up a friend. We walked a few blocks down to the local hospital emergency room. I was there all day and it felt like nothing was happening. After I was finally seen, the doctor sent me for an ultrasound. After he reviewed the scan, he came into the exam room and said, "It looks like you might have cancer, but we will not know unless we remove it. I have scheduled you for surgery at

8 AM tomorrow morning." Just like that I was going to have my right ball removed. No other information other than I was scheduled for surgery in just over 12 hours, again to have my ball removed! I didn't even know you could live with just one ball.

The next day, I showed up for surgery and everything went according to plan. A couple of days later I received the results—Stage 1A testicular cancer. I met with the urologist, and we decided surveillance would be the best path forward. I had regular bloodwork, CT scans, and chest X-rays for the next two years. Easy enough I guess.

It's now fall of 2011 and I'm moving into college for my senior year!

My test results were all coming back normal, and I was feeling great. Except I started to have some soreness and even swelling in my remaining ball. I immediately contacted my doctor and he had me come in. He checked everything out and sent me for an ultrasound. Later that day I received a call. He thought it was an infection called epididymitis and prescribed me antibiotics. He said the swelling should go down in a couple of weeks.

A month later, the soreness and swelling was still there and I found myself back in his office. Another ultrasound was done and the two scans were compared. This time it was noticeable—there was a mass. This time, my doctor wasn't so quick to schedule me for surgery. He referred me to another urologist for a second opinion. The second doctor had the same prognosis. "It looks like cancer, but we won't know unless we remove it." I was scheduled for surgery a week and a half later.

Thankfully this allowed me some time to bank sperm. I was able to make two deposits before my surgery. At the age of 22, I had no idea what life had in store for me, let alone if anyone wanted to marry and have kids with a guy that had been neutered.

Surgery came around and just like the first time everything went according to plan, they even implanted a prosthetic ball on the left side. A couple of days later I got the results. Again it was stage 1A, we caught it early! This time however my doctors and I had a long conversation about the road ahead. Ultimately, I selfishly opted for surveillance because I was ready to finish college on time, which I did, and move on with life.

Thankfully, almost 10 years out my scans still remain clear, and my bloodwork is normal.

I would be lying if I told you, I don't have scanxiety every time I go in for a test or bloodwork. But I guess it comes with having a cancer story.

Remember how I mentioned the two deposits I was able to make in the sperm bank before my second surgery? In 2019, my wife (yes, somebody married me!) and I decided we would make a withdrawal and start a family. I banked at a fertility clinic, so it was convenient to work with them and determine the best route to start a family. Due to the low numbers of sperm I was able to bank (remember I was only working with one ball), the doctors recommended we do In vitro fertilization or IVF. This process would take months and involve multiple procedures and countless shots for my wife. We understood the process wouldn’t be easy, but we wanted to move forward with it anyway.

Unlike surgery to remove my balls, the surgery to implant my wife with an embryo did not go according to plan. Actually, the first three times didn’t. But we were determined. After switching clinics and doing copious amounts of research our fourth transfer took and resulted in pregnancy earlier this year.

While our IVF journey is a story of its own, I feel it is an important one to share alongside my cancer story.

My wife put it best in our Facebook pregnancy announcement:

“The path to growing our family has been long and challenging. And even though this journey stole so much from us, it also gave us a lot. It gave Matt and I more time to become stronger and happier. It helped us understand what truly matters. It fostered so much growth that nothing else could have generated. It allowed us to grow an amazing and supportive village to raise our baby amongst. It taught us how adversity and happiness can coexist, and how that dichotomy has made our life more meaningful.”

When I was first diagnosed and scheduled for surgery the next day I didn’t even know if someone could live let alone have a ‘normal’ life with one ball, let alone NONE!

Throughout my journey and especially today I would not have been able to get through it without the support of others. Especially my brothers at the Testicular Cancer Foundation where I have found a lot of help and support in survivorship. Having cancer and beating it is only half the battle.

Be sure to connect with Matt by visiting him at https://www.facebook.com/matt.froestad or https://www.instagram.com/matt_fro/.Until next time, Carpe Scrotiem!

Know someone (or even yourself!) who is supporting TC awareness and would be willing to share their story? Drop their name, contact, and why they should be featured into this Google Form and I’ll reach out to them and/or you!

This post originally appeared on A Ballsy Sense of Tumor on November 5, 2021. It is republished with permission.