

### **Diane's story: a breast cancer survivor at EMCOR**

My name is Diane Whyte and I work for EMCOR. I am a mother, grandmother, wife, and a breast cancer survivor. Luckily, my cancer was caught in the very early stages after I found a lump in the shower. I went to my doctor genuinely thinking it was cyst as I have no history of breast cancer in my family and have always been healthy. When my doctor told me it was cancer I could not believe it. My initial reaction was one of shock; I didn't think anything beyond that but just knew I needed to pick myself up and carry on; working at EMCOR and keeping busy made it easier to cope.

Following a needle biopsy - in which a small sample of the lump is taken - and a mammogram x-ray of the breast, I underwent surgery to remove the lump, along with 13 lower lymph nodes from under my arm in case the cancer had spread. This was followed by a daily course of radiotherapy for five weeks.

The real problems started when I began after my second course of chemo treatment. It quickly became apparent that I was severely allergic to the chemo. As a result, I was hospitalised for three weeks and out of action for six months.

Relying on the tremendous support of family, friends and EMCOR colleagues, I began to fight back. Talking openly about the disease has really helped me to maintain a positive attitude and make the most of every day life. Easier said than done when you are confined to your bed and you are forced to shave your hair off! Still, I felt like it was a case of mind over matter.

I survived; one of the lucky ones. I lost my sister to bowel cancer so I'm reminded of that every day.

I continue to attend a support group to keep in touch with people who went through similar experiences.

My message to you is this: self breast examination is extremely important and if you find a lump, immediately see your doctor as early diagnosis is crucial. Without that I may not have been here today, writing this story.