

# Pink Genes

*A Joondalup nurse is making a difference for women with a family history of breast cancer*

A Joondalup Health Campus nurse has launched a support group for women who have a strong family history of breast cancer or carry the BRCA1 or BRCA2 gene and are considering surgery to reduce their risk.

Mandy Morgan-Jones, 50, launched 'Pink Genes' following her brave decision

to undergo a double mastectomy after discovering she had an 80 per cent chance of developing breast cancer earlier this year.

"I have three generations of family with breast cancer with the additional risk factor carried through my grandfather's Canadian First Nations heritage. After 12-months of discussion

and information seeking, I decided to undergo a double mastectomy," said Ms Morgan-Jones.

"After making this decision I looked for support groups for information, support and discussion and found none. My hope is to help and support others who are going through the decision process, through surgery and on to reconstruction. Pink Genes - through the Breast Cancer Network WA - is not only for those of us going through this process, but our husbands, friends and families who are taking this journey too."

In October 2013, Ms Morgan-Jones underwent surgery to have both of her breasts removed, a procedure known as a prophylactic or risk-reducing mastectomy.

According to statistics, around 12 per cent of Australian women have a lifetime risk of developing breast cancer, but this risk greatly increases to 60 per cent if you have a strong family history like Ms Morgan-Jones or carry the BRCA1 or BRCA2 gene.

"In many respects my decision has been an easy one. I know that I don't want to look back in five years, have breast cancer and think that I could have done something about it," Ms Morgan-Jones said.

Working as a nurse in the Joondalup Health Campus Emergency Department, Ms Morgan-Jones understands first-hand the vital role support groups play in a patient's journey to recovery.

"There is a lot of support for women who have been diagnosed or are recovering from breast cancer, but there is little support for women like me who are undertaking drastic steps to reduce our risk," she said.

"A mastectomy is a massive change in a woman's life and has a significant physical and emotional impact. I wanted to create a community where women can help one another, share their stories and experiences, which is ultimately why I created Pink Genes." PH

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Mark Morgan-Jones & Mandy Morgan-Jones

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