

50 Miles in 50 Days: Thriving after Surviving Breast Cancer

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After conquering 15 months of treatment and triumphantly kicking triple-negative breast cancer in the butt, all Sharael Kolberg wanted for her birthday was to run. So she did. Kolberg celebrated her 50th year by running a mile. Well, 50 miles in 50 states over 50 days to be more specific.

Before her diagnosis, fitness was a big part of Kolberg's everyday life. She was a regular runner and enjoyed being active outdoors. Kolberg had been featured in *Women's Health* as one of their Action Heroes of 2017. Less than a year later, Kolberg was diagnosed with triple-negative breast cancer in August 2018.

"In treatment, during chemo[therapy], the worst part is fatigue," Kolberg shared. "There were times when I couldn't get out of bed for five days. There were multiple days when I couldn't even open my eyelids. That's how fatigued you are."

She tried to get out as much as possible even if it meant a short walk. Staying active even when it was very light, had such positive effects on her emotional and physical well-being.

Kolberg lost a total of 25 pounds during chemotherapy and found herself far from the normal she had once known. No matter how tough the days became, she never stopped fighting.

On December 19, Kolberg finished her treatment after months of standard and oral chemotherapy and two lumpectomies. She was proudly cancer-free.

"With breast cancer, you're never back to normal. It's a new normal," Kolberg said. "There's a transition from surviving to thriving."

The journey to build back her strength and get back to more vigorous exercise took about six months for Kolberg. She began with slow walking, moving up to yoga, and light weight training.

To celebrate her 50th birthday in August, Kolberg wanted to visit all 50 states and run a mile in each state, but the COVID-19 pandemic rearranged her plans. And like the rest of the world, she turned to Zoom.

She stayed in her hometown and decided to run 50 miles in 50 days starting on her 50th birthday. Each mile, she streamed on Zoom with someone from a different state.

It was not an easy task to find someone from each state, but Kolberg met amazing people from each state and learned so much about each person and state. She ran with fellow breast cancer thrivers and athletes who just wanted to spread awareness and support a good cause.

“It’s been an amazing experience,” Kolberg said. “I think I’ve inspired people to take their Zoom meetings on the road. It’s a new angle to bring people together all over the country and get outside and support each other.”

Her 50-mile run was not only for her own celebration but for inspiration and hope for those with breast cancer or surviving breast cancer.

“For those going through treatment, I’ve been in your shoes and you will be in my shoes again soon. Running, walking, and doing what you love.”

In honor of Breast Cancer Awareness month, Kolberg is hosting 31 for the Cure where she challenges participants to run or walk 31 miles in October. After her October, she is working to start a regular virtual running club.

By November 1, Kolberg will have run for 81 consecutive days.

To learn more about Sharael Kolberg’s breast cancer journey, charity work, and running challenges visit 50fortheCure.org or follow [@50fortheCure](https://www.instagram.com/50fortheCure) on Instagram.

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What do you think?
