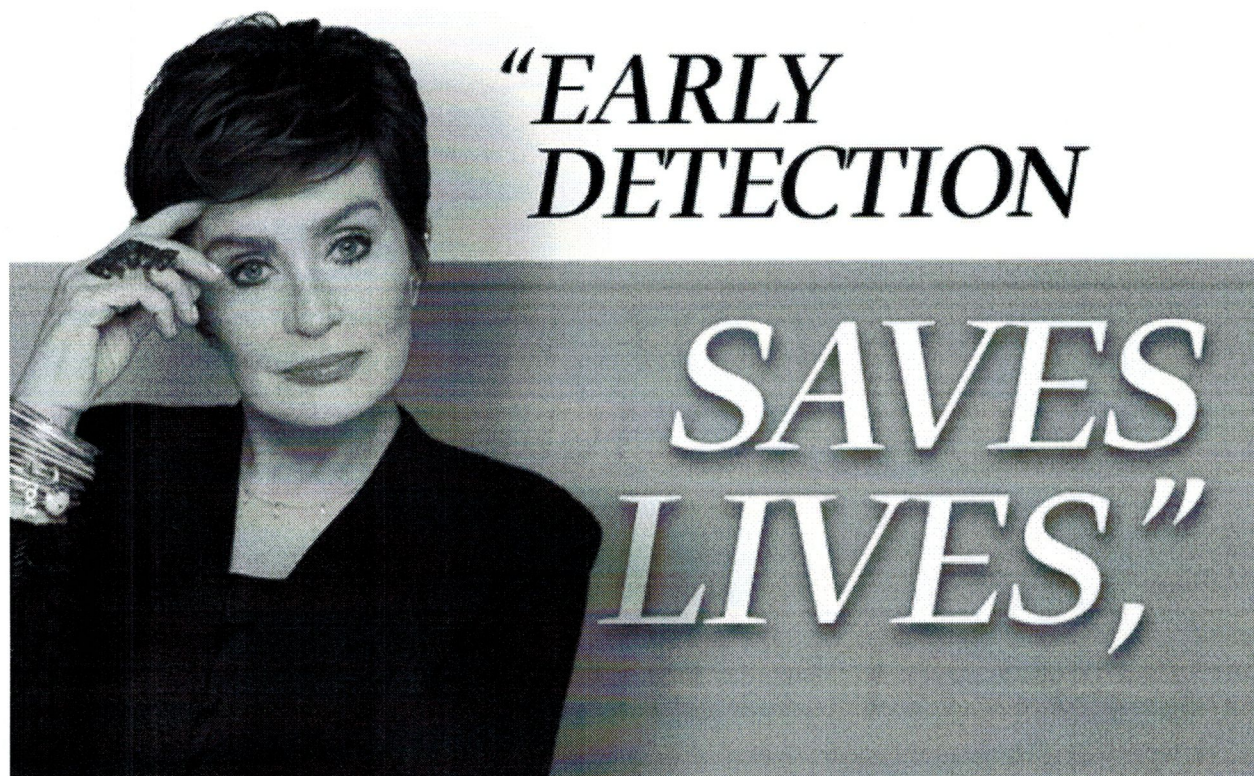




## Cancer Survivor Sharon Osbourne Recalls Her Ordeal That Was "Worse than You Can Imagine."

**DIGESTIVE HEALTH** How Sharon Osbourne found strength to make it through the worst ordeal of her life.



Colorectal cancer is the third most commonly diagnosed cancer in Canada.

Sharon Osbourne had just arrived in New York City to film an episode of *The Osbournes*, a reality television show that followed her family's daily life, when she got a phone call that would change her life. An employee contacted her in her hotel room and read the results of a colonoscopy. Osbourne had colon cancer.

"My stomach just dropped," recalls Osbourne, who has been married to rock legend Ozzy Osbourne since 1982. "I ran into the bathroom, threw up, and then collapsed on the floor crying. I was that terrified." Her children, Aimee, Kelly, and Jack, were with her at the time. They called their father, who arranged for a plane to take his family home, to Los Angeles.

*"On the first day you get the chemo, you feel fine but, oh my Lord, the next day you feel absolutely horrible."*

A  
world  
of

### support

When the plane landed, he was waiting on the tarmac holding a bouquet of flowers. "Ozzy was wearing a suit that I loved and my favourite cologne," Osbourne recalls 13 years later. "He took



me in his arms and said 'It's going to be fine.' It was just amazing."

In less than 24 hours, she was being prepped for surgery at Cedars-Sinai Hospital. Her surgeon prepared her for every possible outcome. "In the the best-case scenario, he would discover that the cancer had not spread. He would cut it out and I wouldn't require further treatment," she says. "I was feeling optimistic. I was of the mind that I would be fine after the operation." But it was not to be.

The cancer had spread to her lymph nodes. After having two feet of her gastrointestinal tract removed, Osbourne faced eight months of chemotherapy.

"On the first day you get the chemo, you feel fine but, oh my Lord, the next day you feel absolutely horrible. It's like your body has been attacked. You deal with diarrhea and vomiting — and that is just the beginning," Osbourne says. "Soon, your sense of smell gets distorted and you can't taste food. Your hair falls out, including your eyebrows and eyelashes. It's worse than you can imagine."

Osbourne also suffered seizures while undergoing chemotherapy. "I was having massive seizures intermittently. They came without warning and that was truly frightening."

### **A second chance and a new perspective**

Osbourne emerged from her battle with cancer, which was documented in the second season of *The Osbournes*, with a new outlook on life. "It made me realize that what I do in the entertainment business is really quite ridiculous — insignificant in the big picture. I know that because my journey opened up my world to people whose work is truly important, people who save lives and help those in need. It was all very humbling."

Osbourne also became more appreciative of people in general. "During my ordeal, I received thousands of letters of support from people all over the world. Complete strangers reached out to me with their prayers and words of encouragement," she says. "It was amazing and it made me realize that people are inherently good."

It's been more than a decade since Osbourne was diagnosed with colon cancer, the third most prevalent cancer in Canada and the second most common cause of cancer deaths. Since then



she has furthered her career through her involvement with other television shows, including The X Factor, America's Got Talent, The Celebrity Apprentice and, more recently, The Talk. But she hasn't forgotten her health scare.

Osbourne remains involved with the Sharon Osbourne Colon Cancer Foundation, which she established in 2004 to help others battling the disease, and she continues to spread an important message. "Get checked regularly and listen to your body. It will tell you if something is wrong. If you have severe abdominal pains, like I did, or a lump on your breast, go see a doctor. Early detection saves lives," she says. "Life is a gift. Don't take it for granted."

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