

# Everyday Heroes: From breast cancer to bodybuilder

by Ian Parker, KATU News | Monday, May 9th 2016



Kayla Christensen training at the PeaceHealth Southwest Medical Center Gym.



VANCOUVER, Wash. -- Kayla Christensen was not surprised to find out she had the gene linked to an increased risk of breast cancer.



"My grandma had breast cancer," Kayla said. "My aunt had breast cancer twice. My mom had breast cancer. My cousin tested positive for the gene."



For her, the preventative double-mastectomy to greatly decrease her risk of getting breast cancer was worth it.



"I didn't want to have to worry or have to go through chemo and radiation," Kayla said. "I watched that with my mom and that's not something I wanted to have to do."

Kayla said after her surgery she needed to find a way to take control of her body.

So she started going to the gym, enjoyed it, and decided to give bodybuilding a shot.

"Bodybuilding to me was something I could control," Kayla said. "It just made me feel better about the rest of my body as opposed to the part that was taken away."

Eventually Kayla had breast implants put in, and her decision to show off her body at bodybuilding competitions blew away her surgeon, [Dr. Allen Gabriel](#).



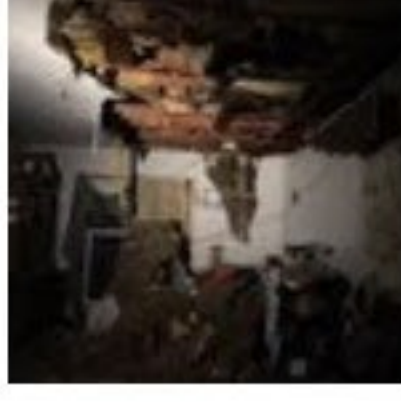

"She has become an inspiration not only for us, but for so many patients," Dr. Gabriel said. "Especially young 20-year-olds that are currently deciding whether to have this procedure."

"It's important for them to know, to look at Kayla and speak to Kayla and see that life goes on and you can continue doing and achieving your dreams."

Kayla said she's happy to help other women facing the same daunting decision she did.

"If they just wanna talk about how hard it is to lose that part of you it's like 'been there' so I know kind of what it feels like," Kayla said. "It's just different when you talk to someone that's been there -- been there done that. And I'd love to help other people."

## TRENDING

- 1 2 HOURS AGO  
NWS: Small tornado tips trailers, knocks out power in North Portland 
- 2 14 HOURS AGO  
Indonesia Lion Air flight with 188 on board crashes into sea 
- 3 7 HOURS AGO  
Wet ceiling and drywall crumble inside home during kids' birthday party 
- 4 7 HOURS AGO  
Police arrest man linked to non-custodial mother who abducted daughter in Vancouver 
- 5 6 HOURS AGO  
Clogged storm drains create massive puddles and problems for morning commuters 