

# Captain Hope Triumphs

For years, Peter Hoepfner dressed up in a superhero costume and participated in marathons to raise funds for cancer research. Then ten years ago, Peter got unimaginable news, he had colon cancer.

While away at work in Texas, Peter had unexpectedly lost 30 pounds in less than three months. "I thought it was the food," Peter recalls "there were two options, covered in gravy or deep fried and I didn't like either". When he returned home to Medicine Hat, he visited his family doctor who became concerned about the rapid weight loss. Peter was referred to a specialist who ordered tests including a colonoscopy. The test found that Peter had a tumour in his colon, and he was diagnosed with stage three colon cancer. Immediately he was scheduled for surgery to remove the tumour at Medicine Hat Regional Hospital. Peter's surgeon informed him that depending on the amount of colon that needed to be removed, he could wake up with a colostomy bag that he would need for the rest of his life, which worried Peter.

After surgery, Peter remembers waking up in his room in the hospital "I woke up and immediately patted my side, checking for the colostomy bag". Realizing nothing was there, he felt relieved. Surgery went well and the tumour was removed. However, surgery was just the start of his fight against cancer.

Discharged from the hospital, Peter returned home with a two month treatment plan, which included daily radiation and having to wear a chemotherapy pump twenty-four hours a day. The chemotherapy drugs had hardened his veins and Peter recalls the pain he felt every time he was poked with a needle but he persevered through treatment. He credits his positive attitude for helping him through saying, "don't go into treatment thinking bad thoughts". Peter's optimism helped him take the treatments in stride and today his cancer is in remission.

Peter reflecting back on his experience noted "Stay positive. Always stay positive". Peter's advice is to experience life in the present "go do stuff, stuff I should've done years ago".

This January will mark ten years of Peter's fight against cancer. Peter is staying true to his advice, he is flying across the world to Australia, going for a cruise to view the Great Barrier Reef and visit friends". As for his superhero days, when asked what superhero he would represent in future marathons his answer was clear "Captain H. H representing hope".

Thanks to donors like you, Peter was able to have surgery in his home city of Medicine Hat. The Greatest Needs fund has supported several types of surgical scopes helping patients like Peter.