

# Many partners of young breast cancer patients suffer anxiety

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(HealthDay)—Breast cancer can take a heavy toll on the partners of

patients, too, according to a study presented at the American Society of Clinical Oncology's Cancer Survivorship Symposium, held from Jan. 27 to 28 in San Diego.

Nancy Borstelmann, M.P.H., M.S.W., director of social work at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in Boston, and colleagues surveyed 289 [partners](#) of patients diagnosed with breast cancer at age 40 or younger. Of those partners, 284 were male, and three out of four were parenting children at the time of the diagnosis.

The stress of managing breast cancer care was found to provoke symptoms of [anxiety](#) in 42 percent of partners and caregivers. Partners were more than twice as likely to report anxiety if they became emotionally withdrawn, went into denial about the situation, abused alcohol, started blaming others for their problems, or grew agitated and aggressive, Borstelmann said. Partners who already faced stress from financial concerns, insufficient social support, and the demands of being a parent were more likely to suffer anxiety from a breast cancer diagnosis. The two factors most strongly associated with stress were poor coping skills and lack of a college education.

"Partners of young [breast cancer](#) survivors who used less constructive/more maladaptive coping strategies experience negative mental health outcomes after treatment has ended. Caregivers' anxiety may have implications for both their own and survivors' health and quality of life," the authors write. "Future interventions might focus on the development of constructive coping strategies to enhance adjustment and role effectiveness in dealing with the impact of cancer."

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