

# FRAN DRESCHER'S NEW LIFE

What the sitcom star learned about cancer the hard way—so you don't have to

**F**ran Drescher is concerned about vaginas—my mother's in particular. How is it doing after her cancer treatment, she wants to know?

Let me say for the record that among the many things I don't discuss with my mother, the state of her hoo-hoo is at the top of the list. Nor is it a particularly comfortable subject to talk about here, at a swank New York City restaurant, chowing down with the glamorous Drescher, who's dressed head to toe in Versace and delicately sipping edamame soup.

But Drescher and my mother (and, as it happens, Drescher's mother) had uterine cancer, and then radical hysterectomies—which includes the removal of the uterus, fallopian tubes, cervix and ovaries. My mother had radiation treatments; Drescher herself did not, and mentions the potential side effects, including vaginal dryness. Hence Drescher's curiosity about my mother. "A lot of women suffer," she says. "They

really advise you to either have sex regularly or, you know, use a device or something to keep the vagina stretched."

Smiling cheerfully to mask my mortification, I try to imagine an alternate universe in which I might ask my mother about her sex life or other vaginal activity. But this is why 49-year-old Fran Drescher—actress, writer, speaker and now activist for women's early cancer diagnosis—is such an extraordinary spokeswoman: She can talk about even the most intimate subjects with openness, heart and good humor—and a passion born of personal pain.

This June marks seven

years that Drescher has been cancer-free—a fitting time for the launch of her new movement, Cancer Schmancer. Named after her 2002 memoir, *Cancer Schmancer* has one ambitious goal: to raise awareness of all women's cancers to the point where they'll be diagnosed in stage 1 of the disease, when they're most curable. "You know, women have to reprogram themselves," Drescher says. "They really have to pay attention to those early warning symptoms and ask for available tests that can rule out serious illnesses. Cancer Schmancer is the missing link between research for a cure

By  
JUDITH  
NEWMAN

