

PREGNANT WITH BREAST CANCER

One woman’s journey at VCU Massey Comprehensive Cancer Center

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Tasha Cade was overjoyed when she found out she was pregnant with her first child in 2022, but that moment was quickly followed by some of the worst news of her life. In her first trimester she was diagnosed with breast cancer.

“I had a wave of emotions, I was in a state of confusion,” Tasha recalled.

Tasha underwent a lumpectomy, and was told soon after that she needed a mastectomy. She wanted an oncologist who had experience treating breast cancer in pregnant women. Tasha’s grandmother had passed away from breast cancer, which motivated her to seek a second opinion at **VCU Massey Comprehensive Cancer Center**.

Tasha met with **Dr. Kandace McGuire**, the chief of breast surgery and the interim senior vice president of the Cancer Service Line at Massey. McGuire’s compassion and professionalism brought her comfort. However, what fortified her confidence in Massey was McGuire’s experience in performing mastectomies on pregnant women.

“That just put me at ease knowing that she had done this before,” said Tasha. “She just made me feel very confident in my care.”

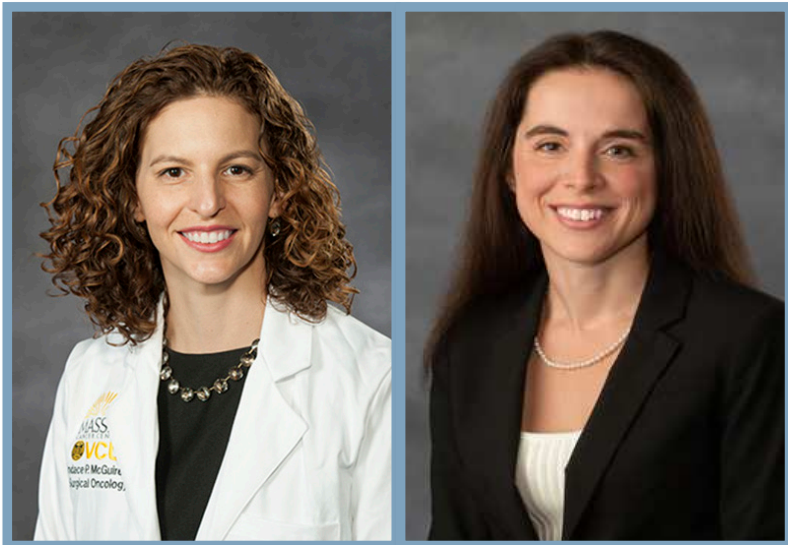
“Breast cancer in pregnant women is extremely rare. It happens in less than 1 in 10,000 pregnancies,” McGuire said. “With modern medicine and surgical techniques, patients who are diagnosed with breast cancer during pregnancy do fairly well and so do their babies.”

In January 2023, Tasha had her mastectomy, and says she could not have gotten through it without Dr. McGuire’s medical expertise, grace and compassion.

“I’m on the operating table, and Dr. McGuire is holding my hand because I’m literally bawling, and she says, ‘You’re going to be fine. You’re going to be okay.’ Thankfully, it turned out incredibly well,” said Tasha.



After surgery, Tasha awaited further treatment until the birth of her baby boy, Kaden, in May of that year. Immediately following his birth, Tasha started taking tamoxifen, an estrogen blocker that helps treat and prevent breast cancer recurrences. **Dr. Paschalia Mountziaris**, Tasha’s plastic surgeon, performed a double breast reconstruction on Tasha shortly after Kaden’s birth.



Dr. Kandace McGuire and Dr. Paschalia Mountziaris

Today, instead of facing a cancer diagnosis, Tasha is navigating motherhood with her two-year-old son, Kaden. She is endlessly grateful for the comprehensive care she received at Massey and still makes the two-hour drive to Richmond for follow-up appointments.

“I couldn’t have painted a better picture for my life,”

Tasha said. “I have the child that I prayed for. Kaden is so smart. He’s so handsome. He’s a mama’s boy. He’s stuck to my side constantly. Two and a half years removed, I am just very thankful for the care that I’ve been given and for Massey, Dr. McGuire, and her team.”

“The fact that I have so much faith in VCU, I drive. I had a lot of appointments, but I didn’t mind making that commute because I knew that I was in good hands,” said Tasha. “Anytime I send a message through the portal, they respond immediately. They’re always just so caring.”

Thanks to Massey, the book of motherhood will have many more chapters for Tasha.



Visit vcumassey.org/breastcancer to learn more.

Scan the QR code to watch more of Tasha’s story.

