

"I always appreciated everything in my life, but getting through this will make it that much more sweet," says Harris (at home in Encino, Calif., April 5).

**ACCORDING TO HER DOCTORS, EVERYTHING WAS FINE.** After all, Samantha Harris had a clean mammogram just a few months earlier, and even after she found a lump in her right breast during a self-exam in October, doctors didn't appear to worry. When she saw a breast cancer specialist, a biopsy found a typical ductal cell proliferation, though it wasn't cancerous. Out of an abundance of caution, she and her doctor agreed she would have a lumpectomy "just to be safe." That's when Harris, just 40, got the news she had feared the most: It was, in fact, breast cancer. "It felt like an elephant was sitting on my chest," she says of the diagnosis. When she told her husband, Michael Hess, 44, a financier, "my knees gave out," she recalls, tearing up. "We just cried together." But despite the horror of the news, the former *Dancing with the Stars* host insists she feels lucky. "I might not have found it until *much* further down the road," she says. "But I didn't take no for an answer."

At first she grappled with the choice of a double mastectomy or a less radical second lumpectomy and radiation. "That would have been simpler. I would be able to pick up my kids," says Harris, who is mom to Hillary, 3, and Josselyn, 6, and has not yet shared the news with her girls. But she decided instead to have the double mastectomy: "Once I made this decision, I felt so much calmer." With her surgery scheduled for the end of April, at which point doctors can classify the cancer's stage, "it feels daunting and overwhelming," she says. "But getting to the other side will feel great."

—JENNIFER GARCIA

FORMER *DWTS* HOST  
SAMANTHA HARRIS

# MY BREAST CANCER BATTLE



"She has a positive attitude, and that's crucial," says Hess (with Harris and, from left, Hillary and Josselyn).