

Naturopathic Medicine & Breast Cancer Care

by Moses Goldberg, ND

Naturopathic Doctor licensed for primary care in California

We all have known someone in our lives who has been affected by breast cancer. Statistics show that one in eight women will have this disease at some point in their life. I stress to my patients: find out what are the causes of breast cancer as well as working through treatment of this condition. In our country we spend a lot of money on the "War on Cancer," which has officially been described as a failure. Too often we look at what are the solutions to a problem, instead of looking at what caused the problem. We need to take a holistic perspective to create a more open approach to healing and healthcare. Look beyond the symptoms to what may have created the cancer for this will ensure that future generations will succumb less to this disease.

(*The New England Journal of Medicine, 2000; 343:78-8*) had a report looking at what caused cancers. Was it due to genes that a person inherited or their environment? The results showed explicitly that the environment causes more cancer than genes. It is important that we look to our lifestyles, our habits, our diet, our state of stress and mind, for these all play a vital role in health. Here are some things to consider for enhancing your health and preventing risks which can lead to cancer.

Eat a whole foods diet – Comprised of vegetables, fruits and sustainable protein. The greatest reductions in DNA damage levels occurred with increased consumption of vegetables. People who ate more beef and pork showed higher DNA damage levels. (*Journal of the American Dietetic Association, 1998; 98:524-528*)

Avoid toxic exposures - Three studies have shown elevated levels of OCCs (organochlorine compounds) in adipose tissue of breast cancer patients as compared to controls.

1. The chemicals found in higher amounts in the malignant persons were: DDT, DDE, PCBs, and HCH (hexachlorocyclohexane) - also known as lindane, Kwell or BHC, a chlorinated pesticide commonly used to treat lice infestations.
2. A significant positive association was found with No-Pest Strips, flea collars, diazinon use in garden and orchard, pesticide bombs, termite TX, and herbicides.
3. The role of the xenoestrogens are key: These weak estrogens can play havoc by stimulating the growth of estrogens and thus breast tissue. (*Arch Environ Contam Toxicol, 1993;24:87-92*)
4. Recent studies show that when blood was in the presence of plastic test tubes, it would develop Estrogenic like characteristics. They are endocrine receptor disrupters and mimickers. Be cautious with heat and plastic as well. Avoid cooking in no-stick cookware.

Keep blood sugar and insulin levels under control – Proper diet and exercise helps! A report at the annual meeting of American Society of Clinical Oncology a few years back stated that breast cancer patients with high insulin levels in their blood seem to be more likely to die of their disease. Insulin in the presence of estrogen increased cellular proliferation in the breast by 12 times.

Increase in your diet – Sea vegetables such as seaweeds which provide iodine an essential mineral.

Increase fiber in your diet – Insoluble dietary fibers such as lignans found in flaxseeds, bran layers of grains, beans and other seeds. Fiber binds to the unconjugated estrogens in the digestive tract and secretes them. The higher fiber enhances the intestinal bacteria - flora, which will also increase, levels of SHBG (Sex Hormone Binding Globulin) - binds the excess. Fiber also will inhibit the conversion of testosterone and other hormone components into estradiol as well.

Drink Green Tea – Green Tea is a strong antioxidant that increases your immune system and acts as an anti-inflammatory. Take 275 – 300 mg daily or drink two to three cups of tea. It is important to leave your tea bags in the pot of tea for optimal absorption.

Vitamin D – Vitamin D inhibits estrogen receptor-positive and estrogen receptor-negative mammary tumorigenesis without hypercalcemic toxicity. (*Cancer Prev Res, Phila., Pa, 2008 Nov; 1(6):476-84*)

Proper sleep at night and Melatonin – The Danish government has recently begun to compensate women who developed breast cancer after long spells of working night shifts. Denmark's decision follows a ruling in 2007 by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), the cancer wing of the World Health Organization, that overnight shifts probably increase the risk of developing cancer, although other factors could also contribute. Scientists suspect that overnight work could be dangerous, because it disrupts the circadian rhythm, the body's biological clock. The hormone melatonin, which can suppress tumor development, is normally produced at night.

Exercise – Don't forget the obvious—movement. This does not mean you have to join the gym – it is just a matter of movement! The (Family Nurse Health Study and Breast Cancer) showed a decrease risk of mortality from breast cancer in those who walked three miles per hour one to three times per week (25 % reduce recurrence) and those who walked three miles per hour three to six times per week (50 % reduce recurrence in nurses with prior stage I, II, III of breast cancer).

Turmeric: why it's so good – Cancer is also an inflammatory disorder, as accumulating evidence suggests that pro-inflammatory markers such as nitric oxide (NO), prostaglandin E(2) (PGE(2)), and NF KAPPA B (NF-κB) are involved in the pathogenesis of various chronic inflammatory diseases and cancer. (*Mol Pharmacol, 2008 Sep; 74(3):654-61*)

Eat curry as much as possible and consider taking at least 1 gram in capsules.