Breast Cancer Care and Prevention: Guidelines for a Healthy Lifestyle

These guidelines may help to prevent breast cancer. They will also help you stay as healthy as possible if you are receiving breast cancer treatment.

Nutrition

- Drink lots of filtered water.
- Eat organic foods that are not contaminated with pesticides and herbicides.
- Avoid processed foods.
- Eat fatty fish such as salmon and sardines 1-3 times/week or take fish oil supplements daily. (See supplement section below). Eat less albacore tuna, shark, swordfish, king mackerel, and tile fish since they can be more contaminated with mercury.
- Eat 5-9 servings of fruits and vegetables each day. (The more, the better). Cruciferous vegetables (broccoli, cauliflower, brussels sprouts, cabbage and kale) help prevent cancer. Eat 1-2 servings of these daily if possible.
- Eat an anti-inflammatory, Mediterranean diet. This diet avoids harmful fats and increases helpful omega 3 fatty acids (found in ocean fish, walnuts, soybeans, greens, flax seed meal). The Mediterranean diet includes nuts, fresh vegetables and fish. See the following website: http://www.med.umich.edu/umim/food-pyramid/about.htm.
- Drink 3 cups of green tea daily to help reduce your breast cancer risk.
- Maintain a healthy body weight. Keep your Body Mass Index (BMI) at 29 or less.
  - See the following website to calculate your BMI: http://win.niddk.nih.gov/publications/understanding.htm#bodymass.
  - Eat smaller portions, which will help you control or lose weight. Don’t overeat.
  - Take your own food in a lunchbox. Eat only what you bring. It will help prevent eating unhealthful foods such as high calorie, fast food when you are hungry.
- Drink no more than 1 serving of alcohol per day if you are a woman, 2 if you are a man.
- Eat more fiber including fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, seeds.
- Eat 1-3 servings of soy food daily. Avoid soy (isoflavone) supplements. Soy foods can help protect against breast cancer.
- Eat 1-2 tablespoons of flax seed meal or oil daily to help reduce your breast cancer risk.

Exercise and movement

- Exercise for 30-60 minutes at least 5 days a week. Do exercise that is enjoyable for you. Exercising more than 3 hours per week may decrease your risk for cancer.
  - Combine aerobic activity such as walking with a resistance or strength training program 2-3 times a week.
  - Nordic walking sticks may increase your overall conditioning, while improving posture, balance and core strengthening.
  - Yoga, tai chi, and qigong combine meditation and movement. Benefits include both relaxation and exercise.
Supplements
- Get Vitamin D from spending time in the sun without sunscreen (if you won’t sunburn) or from a supplement. If you live at latitudes farther from the equator, consider getting a blood test (25 hydroxy vitamin D level) in winter to see if you have enough Vitamin D in your body. Take a supplement to keep your level in the mid-normal range (about 50 ng/dL). 1000-2000 IU of Vitamin D3 each day is recommended.
- Take a multivitamin daily. (Take one without iron if you are a postmenopausal woman or male.)
- Take fish oil each day containing at least 1000 mg of EPA and DHA. If you are vegetarian, you can substitute flax seed oil for fish oil.
- You can take melatonin if you have difficulty sleeping. Start with a dose of 3 mg before bedtime. Adjust this dose as needed up to 20 mg at bedtime to help you sleep without causing a hangover the next day. If you are sensitive to melatonin, you may only need 1-2 mg. Do not take melatonin if you have severe depression or bipolar illness. It can cause these conditions to be worse.
  - If you have difficulty falling asleep, take the immediate release form of melatonin.
  - If you have difficulty staying asleep take the long acting (sustained release) form.

Mind-body-spirit interventions and practices
- Create a balanced lifestyle that prevents you from feeling overly stressed.
- Incorporate daily spiritual practices that give meaning and relaxation to your life.
  - Mindfulness-based-stress-reduction is one program that can enhance your well-being and ability to cope and decrease anxiety.
- Spend time with supportive family and friends.
- Take some time for yourself each day.

Sleep
- To sleep best at night: keep naps short during the day, exercise regularly, sleep in a quiet dark room, go to sleep at the same time each day, and do not sleep with a television on.

Tobacco
- Avoid smoking and second-hand smoke.

For additional information, please see our handouts Breast Cancer Care and Prevention: Non-Drug Approaches and Integrative Ways to Reduce Side Effects from Breast Cancer Treatment.

The information in this handout is for general education. It is not meant to be used by a patient alone. Please work with your health care practitioner to use this information in the best way possible to promote your health.