

Be Kind to the Girls



by Mercedes Picot, RNCP, ROHP, n.d.

Keeping you
abreast with
dozens of ways to
keep
your breasts in
great health!

Over ten years ago, I gave a Breast Health presentation to a lively group of women in a local community hall. I remember being concerned about how little the media focused on the actual prevention of breast cancer as opposed to simply trying to increase our “awareness”.

The great irony, thousands of rallies and marches and millions of metres of pink ribbon later, is that women today rightly have as much fear of this condition as they did back in the summer of 2000 and have as little useful information as to how to reduce their risks of contracting it.

As someone so eloquently put it: you're only supposed to be “aware” of breast cancer, but you're not supposed to actually prevent it.

Despite skyrocketing rates of breast cancer, we're sadly no closer to a cure than we were 10 years ago - in fact, no closer than 50 years ago. We do have more chemical treatment options. Most have terrible, even deadly, side effects. They hardly qualify as a cure.

And we have much more access to “early” screening but is it really paying off? Grim breast cancer statistics paint a disconcerting picture.

Our risk has leaped to 1 woman in 8 from only 1 in 20 in the 1960s. Need we be reminded that it has become the second leading cause of death in women in North America?

In fact, much of the focus today is placed on mammographic detection of tumours. Because the cancer has already taken hold once a malignant tumour is large enough to be detected by a mammogram, it can be too late for natural therapies.

Yet, mammograms don't prevent cancer tumours, they're only meant to find them...sometimes. Too often in women under 50, they mistakenly think they've found them or they missed finding them when they should have. In younger women who are genetically disposed to the disease, there is even a growing fear (and compelling evidence) that repeated mammograms may actually be causing them.

Talk to your doctor or look into a safer breast screening option using Infrared Imagery called Thermography. This technology uses no radiation and does not require compression of the breast.

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This article is not meant to remind you any further of the grim statistics. I don't even want to join the growing list of confounded souls questioning why so many of the mega-backers of Breast Cancer Awareness Events have rather critical links to companies that manufacture chemotherapy drugs or mammogram technology. But you can bet your boobies these large corporations have little financial interest in advocating for natural therapies or effective prevention.

It's still unknown whether we can completely eliminate our risk of developing breast cancer. What we do know is that with some improvements to diet and lifestyle, we can significantly lower our risks! So let them have their annual marches for the cure, but don't forget to make your very own personal mad dash to breast health - every day!



So here are my 25 tips for keeping the girls in the pink:

- 1. Eat plenty of fruit & vegetables** - they contain compounds that may prevent several cancers. Choose organic produce whenever possible. Fruit such as pomegranates and berries contain ellagic acid which detox your cells and protect them from free radical damage. Get especially friendly with broccoli, watercress and Brussels' sprouts.
- 2. Eat carotene-rich foods** - carotenoids (like beta-carotene) are important constituents of brightly coloured fruits and vegetables such as broccoli, leafy green vegetables, sweet potatoes, carrots, cantaloupe, peaches and apricots. Researchers at the New York University School of Medicine found positive breast health benefits with dietary intake of carotenoids.
- 3. Avoid harmful fats!** Researchers have found that high fat and cholesterol from typical diets play a big role in the growth and spread of breast cancer. Elevated estradiol levels (a type of estrogen) are linked to the amount of fat in the diet. It is known that many breast cancers are "fueled" by estrogens and most studies correlate high levels of this hormone with breast cancer.
- 4. Eat plenty of fiber** - it acts like nutritional "glue" that eases broken-down estrogen or estrogen metabolites (the liver metabolizes estrogens) through the intestines so it can be excreted. If intestinal transit time is slow or if you suffer from constipation, some of these estrogen metabolites can be reabsorbed. Fiber binds to these estrogens in the gut, preventing their reabsorption, and decreasing bowel transit times. Studies have linked insoluble fiber - the kind that can't be digested - with lower risk of breast cancer. Aim at 35 gm or more per day. High-fiber foods include vegetables, fruits, beans, whole grains, ground flax seed, and chia seeds.
- 5. Reduce or eliminate sugar** and refined carbohydrates - they spike insulin levels and set up a cascade of events that predisposes us to breast cancer. Researchers found that breast cancer risk rises with refined carbohydrate (high glycemic carbohydrates) intake - those who eat the most have more than double the risk than those who eat the least. Excess insulin possibly stimulates the growth of tumours and increases systemic inflammation which is a leading factor in all types of cancer.

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6. Eat foods rich in Phytosterols - they inhibit tumours from forming in the breast and shrink the ones already there. Get phytosterols from walnuts, beans, flax seed oil, peanut butter (organic, no sugar please), pistachios, sunflower seeds, almonds, and Brussels' sprouts.

7. Eat beans! I've said it before - they're the perfect food. About ½ cup a day helps both serotonin and melatonin production and regulates blood sugar and insulin levels. Beans are high in fibre helping you to feel full. They contain anti-tumour enzymes, help deactivate breast cancer genes, and reduce inflammation!



8. Drink Green Tea; it's the oldest and healthiest beverage in the world. Studies showed that it's a potent source of polyphenols, especially one called epigallocatechin gallate (EGCG). This compound has been shown to have powerful antioxidant and anti-cancer properties.

9. Take a Calcium - Magnesium supplement. Researchers found that calcium supplements significantly increased DNA's capacity to repair itself and reduced women's risk of breast cancer by as much as 40 percent.

10. Supplement with Omega-3 in the form of Fish oil or Krill oil, or from plant sources such as cold-pressed flax, borage, sesame, pumpkin, hemp or chia oil. Omega-3s have several unique properties: they inhibit tumour growth and they downregulate the inflammatory enzyme COX-2, which promotes breast cancer. You can also get Omega-3s in these foods: wild-caught salmon, anchovies, sardines, grass-fed beef, grain-fed poultry, organic eggs, almonds, walnuts, pecans, avocado, chia seeds, and flax seeds.

11. Go nuts for nuts! A new study shows that eating walnuts could reduce your risk of breast cancer. They contain three powerful cancer fighters: phytosterols, Omega-3s, and flavonoids such as ellagic acid.

12. Eat less red meat and watch how you prepare it. Eating red meat daily doubles your odds, ladies. Choosing organic and hormone-free meat and dairy products reduces your exposure to nasty additives. In a study, women who consumed the most barbecued or grilled meat had a 50 percent higher risk of postmenopausal breast cancer - especially if they rarely ate fruits and vegetables. Grilling creates carcinogenic compounds such as polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) that may harm breast tissue.

13. Avoid all synthetic hormones as much as possible. The Women's Health Initiative Study held in 2003 showed a 24 percent increased risk of breast cancer with synthetic hormone replacement therapy (HRT). Then came the British Million Women Study, showing a 66 percent increase, followed by the French E3N Study showing a 60 percent increase. Chemical contraceptives such as birth control pills, patches, shots and implants show a slight increase in breast cancer risk, especially over long-term use. Teens who use chemical contraceptives, increase their lifetime risk three-fold. Barrier contraception methods such as condoms, diaphragms, cervical caps and sponges present no breast health risks whereas gels and creams show only a slight risk.

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- 14. Take a vitamin D supplement** - research proves that women who are deficient have a marked increased risk of breast cancer. Vitamin D is actually able to enter cancer cells and trigger “apoptosis” or cancer cell death easily making it one of nature's most potent cancer fighters. Don't ignore the headlines! Get your doctor to check your levels.
- 15. Drink purified or filtered water** to reduce your toxic load. Tap water or well water in a farming community can be loaded with toxins. Better yet, add fresh lemon juice to your water - a study at Western Ontario University found that lemons are a powerful tool against breast cancer cells. Include some of the pulp with the juice.
- 16. If you drink alcohol, practice moderation** (the less the better). Consumption of even modest amounts is a risk factor for breast and several other cancers. An important component of risk reduction is to support the body's estrogen metabolism. If you recall, you need your liver on standby for metabolizing estrogens not alcohol!!
- 17. Avoid microwaving your food.** Unhealthy radiolytic compounds are created when microwaves penetrate or- ganic matter such as your lunch. These compounds can cause cellular damage to frequent consumers of microwaved foods.
- 18. Breast feed your babies** for at least 6 months and support your daughters in doing so. Health benefits to the child last throughout their lifetime. Women who have nursed their offspring for more than 3 years in total have around 46 percent reduced risk of breast cancer!
- 19. Limit your use of antibiotics** - many studies link frequent use to an increased risk of breast cancer. This may be because antibiotics destroy the good bacteria in your gut, compromising your immune system.
- 20. Examine your breasts regularly** - become familiar with how they look and feel, checking for changes such as scars, dents, lumps, bumps or unusual discharges.
- 21. Exercise** - only 4 hours a week can reduce your risk by 36-72 percent according to Dr. J. Glaspy of the UCLA Oncology Centre. No need to run marathons, a 20-minute walk three times a week can do it. According to the Nurses' Health Study, walking two miles a day cuts your risk of breast cancer by half. Exercise also helps you to maintain a healthy weight - the very best step.
- 22. Reduce your exposure to toxins** in your environment. Choose organic products for your lawn and garden and for cleaning your home. Avoid dry cleaning, plastic bottles and containers, chemical personal care products such as nail polish and remover, cosmetics, shampoos, conditioners and toothpastes which contain endocrine hormone disrupting **parabens**. Avoid scented soaps and switch from poison-laden commercial perfumes to natural sourced scents made from essential oils. Avoid artificial air fresheners and pressed wood or particle-board furniture that off-gasses formaldehyde. Protect your liver even further by limiting your intake of over-the-counter medications such as Tylenol and Aspirin.




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23. Learn to relax and manage stress which drains your body of cancer-fighting chemicals. Constant stress takes a heavy toll by keeping your adrenal hormones high. Cortisol and adrenalin are secreted by your adrenal glands, which are located just over your kidneys, in response to stressful events and inadequate sleep. Chronically elevated cortisol levels significantly increase breast cancer risk — and contribute to weight gain. Find an activity that's relaxing and do it daily. Yoga, meditation, reading or day-dreaming come to mind...

24. Get lots of sleep in a dark room. Sleeping 7-8 hours in total darkness increases melatonin, a hormone that protects you against breast cancer. Sleep repairs and restores and helps with weight control, insulin sensitivity, and healthy immunity - all critical for breast health.

25. And finally...cut the girls some slack. Take off your bra when you get home and especially at night. Women who wear a bra for less than 12 hours a day are twice as likely to keep their girls healthy and in the pink. 

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