



Stop Living in Fear! Take Steps to Prevent Breast Cancer

Breast cancer is striking women in the prime of their lives. Women in United States have a breast cancer rate of approximately 12 %. The rate of premenopausal (before age 50) breast cancer has increased by 30 % in the last thirty years. One out of eight American women will develop breast cancer in their lifetime. Thirty to forty of every 100,000 women in the United States will die of breast cancer. The rate of breast cancer has increased by 1% a year since 1940. Media coverage has increased public awareness and the fear of breast cancer in the U.S.

In Asia the incidence of breast cancer is less than half of the rate found in the U.S. Only 2 to 5 out of 100,000 Thailand women die of breast cancer each year. When women from a country with a low incidence of breast cancer move to the U.S. their breast cancer risk increases. These facts indicate that the breast cancer rate may be influenced by environment, diet, and lifestyle more than genetics.

Studies show that approximately 80% of breast cancers are caused by environmental factors rather than genetic predisposition. While mammograms and breast self-examinations are important, they aid in screening not prevention. They are designed to find tumors at an early stage. However, recent studies have shown that mammograms and early detection do not increase the life span of breast cancer survivors. Therefore, early detection and treatment does not necessarily mean that a woman will live longer with breast cancer. Also, it is controversial whether mammograms are of any benefit to women less than age 50. Cancers diagnosed prior to age 50 are the most aggressive and fatal. If this is true, why shouldn't women be afraid?

The best defense against breast cancer is for women to take control of their health by understanding what they can do to decrease their risk of breast cancer. Several studies and protocols developed at leading medical institutions are proving that there are better ways to determine if a woman is at an increased risk for breast cancer. Dietary changes, nutritional supplements and lifestyle changes can decrease your risk of breast cancer. Even if a woman has breast cancer, these changes may decrease her risk of recurrence.

Are You at Risk for Breast Cancer?

How do you know if you have an increased risk of breast cancer? There are several well- documented risk factors for breast cancer. Here is a list:

-2-

BREAST CANCER RISK FACTORS

- *Family history of mother or sister with breast cancer*
- *Menstruation before age 12*
- *Menopause after age 50*
- *First child after age 30, or no children*
- *More than one fibroadenoma in the breast*
- *More than 40% over ideal body weight*
- *Heavy Alcohol use or Alcohol abuse*

- *More than 5 year use of Premarin® or other synthetic estrogens. The risk is increased when a synthetic progestin like Provera® is added (Prempro®/Prempro Low®)*

Breast cancer develops when genetic information (DNA) in cells is damaged. Estrogen is a growth hormone and therefore increases the rate at which cells grow. When your bodies cells are exposed to excessive estrogen they are stimulated to grow, which can result in cancer. Therefore, by determining a woman's estrogen exposure, we have the information needed to determine her risk of breast, and other cancers. If you have any breast cancer risk factors, it is important that you are tested. Even if you have none of the risk factors, you should be tested, because living in the United States puts a woman at an increased risk of breast cancer. Of the women who developed breast cancer, 70%-80% had none of the risk factors that are listed. Saliva testing is able to measure how much your cells and tissues are exposed to estrogen.

After determining your level of risk, we can help you formulate a strategy to decrease your risk. By making the necessary changes in weight, diet, and lifestyle and taking appropriate vitamin and mineral supplements, a woman can stop living in fear and know that she is doing everything she can to avoid breast cancer.

Preventing Breast Cancer. ...Protect Your DNA.

DNA, found in every cell of the body, contains all the information needed to perform all of its cellular functions. If this information gets damaged and the cell is directed to function abnormally, disease develops. Free radicals damage DNA. Free radicals play a role in aging, heart disease, cancer and most degenerative diseases. Free radicals are produced by the breakdown of fat inside your body. External sources of free radicals include radiation from the sun, cigarette smoke, and air pollutants such as heavy metals, organic solvents in cleaning and home products, pesticides and food additives. The less you are exposed to these harmful chemicals and free radicals, the lower your breast cancer risk.

To protect yourself from these free radicals you need anti-oxidants. Anti-oxidants search for free radicals and neutralize them. Examples of anti-oxidants are vitamin C, vitamin E, beta-carotene, and selenium. These substances are available in fruits and vegetables. Other powerful antioxidants include pigmented or colorful vegetables that contain carotenes, pigmented fruits like cherries and blueberries, and garlic that is also a powerful anti-oxidant. Folic acid and other B vitamins are needed to repair damaged DNA. Folic acid is found in dark green leafy vegetables, fruit and peas. Another powerful antioxidant is green tea. Green tea has been studied extensively and has been proven to be very effective in preventing cancer. You need to drink 3-4 cups per day to receive a therapeutic benefit.

-3-

Eating fruits and vegetables are the best way to obtain anti-oxidants. If you are taking supplements it is best to determine whether or not you actually need all of the supplements that your are taking. Nutritional testing can determine your vitamin and mineral needs.

Is Your Body Metabolizing Estrogens Properly

All estrogens are not the same. Some estrogens are stronger than others. The longer you are exposed to a strong estrogen, the more likely a damaged cell will be stimulated to grow, resulting in cancer. Estradiol is the strongest estrogen that your body makes. It is made with each menstrual cycle. The fewer menstrual cycles you have, the less exposure to estradiol. Early start of menstruation, late menopause, and delayed childbirth increase your risk of cancer. During pregnancy, you make a very weak estrogen called estriol. This may protect against breast cancer. Because women are choosing to have fewer children, delaying childbirth, and bottle-feeding instead of breast feeding, women are experiencing approximately 200 more menstrual cycles than their mothers or grandmothers. Unfortunately, more menstrual cycles expose women to greater amounts of estrogen.

To determine your risk for breast cancer, the amount of estrogen that your body makes has to be considered along with how well your body breaks down and eliminates estrogen. Proper estrogen metabolism and elimination depends upon adequate fiber intake, proper fruit and vegetable consumption, proper vitamin and mineral supplementation, essential fatty acids and proper bowel function. Saliva testing determines the amount of free estrogen exposure. All of the estrogens can be measured. The good news is you can decrease your estrogen levels and alter how estrogen is metabolized by changing your diet and lifestyle. There are several supplements that can increase proper estrogen metabolism. Ask your doctor to help you devise a plan to maximize normal estrogen metabolism.

Do Birth Control Pills Increase Breast Cancer Risk?

Not until recently has there been enough data to evaluate the risk of breast cancer and its relationship to the use of oral contraceptives. There is a 20% increased risk of breast cancer among women who began birth control pills prior to age 20. The risk continues for four years after stopping the birth control pill. All young women and mothers of teenage girls should be aware of this risk. Mothers should think before allowing their teenage daughters to start using birth control pills to control acne, breast tenderness, menstrual cramps, or irregular periods.

Young women that are older than twenty but started using birth control pills prior to age twenty should seriously consider stopping birth control pills as part of their breast cancer prevention strategy. The troubling fact is that the risk does not decrease until you have stopped birth control pills for 4 years. What should you do? I suggest that one uses birth control pills for the shortest possible duration since length of exposure is of vital importance. I suggest that no one under 20 use birth control pills for an extended period of time.

-4-

For example, if you used birth control pills as a teenager but stopped use at age 20 you are at increased risk for another 4 years. Breast cancer is rare in 20 year olds. However, if you started birth control pills at age 15 and you are 35 and have used them for the past 20 years you have significantly increased your risk of breast cancer. You need to understand that most if not all of the symptom relief associated with birth control pills (i.e. bleeding control, relief of menstrual cramps, decrease in acne etc.) can be achieved by balancing hormones. Balancing hormones corrects the problem, birth control pills covers up the problem.

Do Premarin® and Provera® Increase Breast Cancer Risk?

YES! On July 9, 2002, the results of the Women's Health Initiative made front-page news. The study was performed by the National Institute of Health and was designed to be completed over 10 years to answer the following: Does hormone replacement, (Premarin and Provera) increase a woman's risk of breast cancer and do the benefits of treatment outweigh the risk.

After only five years the results were so overwhelming the study was stopped. The risk of breast cancer in the women in the study was increased by 26%. This number may have been higher, since 42% of the women who were selected to take the Premarin® and Provera®, refused to continue in the study because they could not tolerate the side effects. Not only did Premarin® and Provera increase the risk of breast cancer, but it increased the risk of heart disease by 29%, stroke by 41%, Alzheimer's Dementia 200% and blood clots to the lung by 213%.

The results of the study were surprising to most physicians. Estrogen has been prescribed to women without appropriate testing for many years. Most women have normal or high free estrogen levels during menopause, therefore, prescribing estrogen to these women has been detrimental.

Provera®, a synthetic progestin, **which it is not chemically the same as progesterone**, does not have the beneficial effects of your natural progesterone. Provera® actually blocks your body's natural progesterone from having its positive effect by binding to the area of the cell reserved for progesterone. Provera® usually causes weight gain, bloating, depression, hair loss, and increased risk of breast cancer, while progesterone does the exact opposite.

What should women do who are taking Premarin® and Provera® or any other estrogen/progestin combination? First have your estrogen levels checked through saliva testing. Taper off the estrogen over several months if your estrogen levels are high. You can stop the Provera® and use natural progesterone to maintain an appropriate estrogen/progesterone ratio. The book "Are Your Hormones Making You Sick" by Dr. Eldred Taylor will give you information to guide you to healthy hormone balance. We can help you achieve and maintain hormone balance.

Progesterone and Breast Cancer Prevention

Estrogen stimulates cell growth. Progesterone slows cell growth and encourages normal cell development. Estrogen and progesterone should be in balance with each other. If there is more estrogen than progesterone available to the breast cell, it will grow, but not develop normally.

Progesterone has been shown to decrease normal breast cell growth and to slow the growth of cancer cells in the breast and uterus. Progesterone can slow cell growth, even if the cells are exposed to estrogen. In one study, women were given estrogen cream and another group progesterone cream. The number of cells replicating in the estrogen group was 10 times greater than in the progesterone group. Women in the third group received both estrogen and progesterone and their cell growth was normal.

Another study done at Johns Hopkins Medical School revealed that women with progesterone deficiency were 5.4 times more likely to develop breast cancer prior to menopause. It appears that an adequate amount of progesterone is needed to balance the effects of estrogen exposure, which stimulates cancer growth.

As women reach perimenopause (35-50 years old) progesterone declines and estrogen increases, due to decreasing numbers of eggs or follicles in the ovaries and to irregular ovulation. Excess estrogen and decreased progesterone may cause PMS, irregular bleeding, fibroid growth, and weight gain during this time in a woman's life. A decline in progesterone may explain why breast cancer in this age group is more aggressive and fatal. Salivary testing can determine whether or not estrogen and progesterone are in balance. Supplementing with human-identical progesterone, along with dietary and lifestyle changes, in conjunction with use of appropriate nutritional supplements, can decrease your estrogen exposure, thereby, greatly decreasing your risk of breast cancer.

If you have breast cancer, progesterone can be used as a hormone replacement to alleviate hot flashes. Studies have shown that natural progesterone applied to the skin will alleviate menopausal symptoms in 83% of women. Estrogen is contraindicated in anyone who has breast cancer while progesterone is safe and does not increase a woman's risk of recurrence of breast cancer. Progesterone is not contraindicated in breast cancer survivors.

Don't Let Stress Kill You.

It has been suggested that a large percentage of women with breast cancer are diagnosed following a stressful event in their lives, such as a divorce or death of a loved one. Women, who neglected their emotional needs for the sake of others, appear to develop breast cancer at a higher percentage. The abundance of stress results in the constant release of a high level of a stress hormone called cortisol. High cortisol levels over a prolonged period of time impair the function of the immune system. Your immune system is responsible for detecting and eliminating abnormal cells, including the cells damaged by the free radicals discussed earlier.

High cortisol levels decrease thyroid and insulin function. Both low thyroid and insulin resistance are associated with an increased risk of breast cancer. Elevated cortisol increases free estrogen levels, which stimulates breast cell growth. If you are experiencing anxiety, difficulty going to sleep or remaining asleep, early morning fatigue or chronic fatigue, then testing cortisol levels in the saliva may be helpful in diagnosing and treating your condition. If these symptoms began after a stressful event or a series of stressful events you may be suffering from abnormal cortisol levels. Ignoring these

symptoms or covering them up with sleeping pills and antidepressants will not correct the problem nor will it allow the immune system to regain its ability to rid the body of possible cancer causing cells.

Don't Eat Yourself To Death

Many scientists believe that changing one's diet could prevent 80% of all cancers. There is an enormous amount of research that substantiates the link between diet and cancer. Almost every aspect of your diet has an effect on hormone production and metabolism. Meats that can contain hormones and other toxins given to the animals to make them grow faster and increase profits dominate the American diet. These toxins alter hormone function or damage DNA. Many food additives also damage DNA. Therefore, the two factors that cause breast cancer, DNA damage and hormone stimulation can be linked to diet. Decreasing meat consumption is recommended, if you want to decrease your cancer risk. If you eat meat, I suggest using organic meats when possible.

Oils that are chemically processed (called hydrogenation) from seeds can cause cells to function improperly. The processing of oils from seeds produce omega-6 oils. Omega 6 oils, that have been hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated, are harmful. These oils are used as preservatives and are found in almost every food that is in a box or a package at the grocery store to preserve freshness. Hydrogenated and partially hydrogenated oils (trans fats) damage cell membranes, which makes the cell more susceptible to damage. These oils also influence estrogen breakdown, directing estrogen toward the more dangerous cancer-causing pathway.

Good oils are omega 3 and 9. These oils are found in cold-water fish like salmon and mackerel. Olive oil is high in omega-9. Use olive oil or canola oil whenever you cook with oil. Consuming 2 grams of fish oil a day will decrease your risk of cancer and cardiovascular disease.

Decreasing sugar and simple carbohydrates consumption decreases insulin levels, which protects you against cancer. Insulin can stimulate cancer cell growth. Increasing fiber consumption, limiting alcohol, and increasing foods that are antioxidants all play a role in prevention.

What is compounding and how does it benefit me?

We frequently use specially compounded human-identical hormones to formulate individualized treatment programs for each patient. Pharmacy compounding is the art and science of preparing customized medications for individual patients. Within the last two decades, compounding has experienced resurgence as modern technology and innovative techniques and research have allowed more pharmacists to customize medications to meet specific patient needs.