*Breast Cancer: A Natural Approach*

**By Gary Null, Ph.D.**

It is estimated that this year alone over 220,000 women in the United States will be diagnosed with breast cancer and more than 40,000 women will lose their lives to this devastating disease (1). Breast cancer is the second leading cause of death and most commonly diagnosed cancer among American women (2). Despite tens of millions of dollars invested into research each year, little progress has been made in the fight against breast cancer. Not only are mainstream treatments like chemotherapy, radiation and surgery generally not very effective, they also come with a host of dangerous, and sometimes deadly, side effects.

Life-saving solutions don’t start with toxic drugs and risky treatments but prevention. It’s critical to note that prevention involves more than just exercising or purchasing a supplement. Like any inflammatory condition, a whole-body approach is needed overcoming breast cancer. Here we will review some of the pillars of an integrative approach to breast cancer prevention.

**Diet**

Women in our culture have notably high instances of breast cancer. This implies that cultures that eat less fat, especially less animal fat, have the least breast cancer. The answer is really clear. Eat a lot of vegetables, fruits, whole grains and beans. Those foods provide protection.

Along with diet, prescription medications and synthetic hormones greatly influence our country’s high breast cancer rate. This month, studies have shown that cholesterol-lowering drugs called statins can increase risks for invasive lobular carcinoma (the second most common type of breast cancer) by up to 143 percent in women diagnosed with hypercholesterolemia. (3)

Multiple epidemiological studies have looked at the relationship between a person’s lifelong eating pattern and the development of cancer. Thos studies have shown that the more vegetables and fruits a person eats, the less likely they are to develop cancer. People who eat six-to-seven servings of vegetables a day plus three-to-four servings of fruit have the lowest risk.

Certain foods are medicinal in their ability to protect against breast cancer. They include soybeans, soy products, and lima beans. Isoflavones and phytoestrogens found in soybeans, soy products, and lima beans protect against cancer.

A low incidence of breast cancer among Japanese women is largely attributed to a diet consisting primarily of soybeans, miso, tofu tempeh, green and black tea, sea vegetables, fish, whole grains and fruit.

Other cancer-fighting foods include flax, fish that is high in omega-3 fatty acids (salmon, tuna, sardines, mackerel, and herring), cruciferous vegetables (broccoli, cauliflower, and brussels sprouts), mushrooms (reishi, shiitake, and maitake), and onions.

Research conducted by Dr. Cisneros-Zevallos even suggests that peaches inhibit breast cancer metastasis and have chemical compounds capable of killing cancer cells. (4)

Along with these foods, herbs and supplements can also aid in your preventative plan. Herbs like black cohosh, chasteberry, red clover and turmeric are high in phytoestrogens. Phytoestrogen tricks your body into thinking that it’s getting estrogen, but the advantage of phytoestrogens is that they tell your body to lower its own estrogen production, which helps balance your estrogen levels.

Some other herbs to know about are listed below:

*Cat’s Claw*

*Evening Primrose, Borage, and Black Currant Seed Oils*

*Xiao Yao Wan*

*Dandelion*

*Astragalus*

*Rosemary*

*Mint*

**Enzymes**

Enzymes are organic substances that help create reactions in the body, such as breaking down fats. They are linked to all the bodily functions we need to live and stay well. There are 3,000 enzymes in the body. A healthy person can produce enough enzymes to fight off cancer cells, but substances such as free radicals from smoke, pollutants, junk foods, and medications interfere with enzyme production.

Numerous studies link enzymes and breast health. More than 90 were conducted by universities throughout the world regarding the beneficial effects of enzymes. Much of this work has been done in Germany.

**Detoxification**

Activities that detoxify the body can further reduce the chance of acquiring breast cancer. For instance, aerobic exercise assists in lymphatic drainage and induces sweating, which is a natural way for the body to eliminate waste products. And exercise has in fact been shown by studies to be correlated with a lowered breast cancer risk.

Lymphatic detoxification is aided by manual lymphatic drainage (MLD), a simple method of massage that uses light, slow rhythmic movements to stimulate the flow of lymph in the body. This is especially important for women suffering from lymphedema, a condition that often occurs after a mastectomy: When our lymph nodes are not functioning properly or have been irradiated or removed, an excessive accumulation of stagnant waste occurs. The lymph system becomes overloaded, thus forming lymphedema.

MLD should be applied directly after surgery rather than when a massive edema has formed. This will guard against any possibility of a blockage in the system or alleviate any that exists. Studies in Europe show that severed lymph vessels regenerate with constant MLD therapy. The therapy makes the scars from the mastectomy more subtle, which increases the mobility of the arm. It also lessens pain from surgery and the uncomfortable sensitivity that occurs.

**Supplements**

The daily protocol found below of vitamins and minerals is encouraged by Dr. Steven Rachlin, an internist in Syosset, Long Island, New York. Vitamins and minerals are a critical part of breast cancer prevention. Studies at Thomas Jefferson University show that retinoic acid, a derivative of vitamin A, has been proven to turn pre-cancer cells back to healthy breast cells. (5)

*Emulsified vitamin A (up to 50,000 IU)*

*Beta carotene (up to 100 mg)*

*Vitamin B1 (100 mg)*

*Vitamin B6 (100 mg)*

*Folic acid (3,200 mcg)*

*Vitamin C (up to 5 g)*

*Coenzyme Q10 (400 mg)*

*Flaxseed oil (1 tbsp)*

*Cat’s claw (300 mg)*

*Melatonin (up to 10 mg)*

*Pycnogenol (150 mg)*

*Pancreatic digestive enzymes (up to 40 g)*

*Aloe vera juice (9–12 oz)*

*Minerals*

**Psychoneuroimmunology**

A new branch of science, known as psychoneuroimmunology, studies the integration of thoughts, emotions and physical reactions at the cellular level. When a person feels depressed for extended period of time, this state of mind can have adverse effects on the body’s ability to fight off disease and to health itself. On the other hand, positive emotions can aid in maintaining or regaining physical health.

Meditation, visualization and guided imagery are all proven ways to improve one’s psychological and physical health, and potentially decrease risk of breast cancer. It is believed that these practices help boost levels of melatonin in the body, which may help moderate the amount of estrogen in the body.

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2. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2013, July). *National cancer institute 2012 fact book*. Retrieved from http://obf.cancer.gov/financial/attachments/12Factbk.pdf

3.Brownstein, D. (2014, March 25). Statins more than double breast cancer risk. Retrieved from http://blog.drbrownstein.com/statins-increase-breast-cancer-by-over-200/

4. Global Data Point. (2014, March 26). *Life extension: Foundation for longer life*. Retrieved from http://www.lef.org/news/LefDailyNews.htm?NewsID=22132&Section=Disease

5. Maria Arisi, Rebecca Starker, SankarAddya, Yong Huang, Sandra Fernandez. All trans-retionoic acid (ATRA) includes re-differentiation of early transformed breast epithelial cells. International Journal of Oncology, 2014.