

Tips For a Healthy Lifestyle in Women

Breast Cancer

Breast cancer is the illness that many women fear the most, although they are more likely to die of cardiovascular disease than they are of all forms of cancer combined. Still, breast cancer is second only to lung cancer as a cause of cancer deaths in American women. In the United States, it is estimated that around 200,000 women will develop the disease in 2005.

Speaking optimistically, many advances have been made in the past 30 years in diagnosing, treating and in reducing breast cancer deaths. In 1975, a diagnosis of breast cancer usually meant radical mastectomy—removal of the entire breast along with the underarm lymph nodes plus the skin and muscles underneath the breast. Today, this method is rarely performed. Instead, there are better treatments and many women are now candidates for breast-sparing operations.



The following are some suggestions to help reduce your risk:

- Ask your doctor about taking aspirin
- Limit alcohol
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Discuss long-term hormone therapy with your doctor
- Stay physically active
- Eat foods high in fiber
- Limit fat in your diet
- Utilize olive oil
- Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables
- Avoid exposure to pesticides
- Avoid unnecessary antibiotic use

New Directions in Research:

Scientists are investigating a number of potential preventative therapies for breast cancer, including:

- Retinoids- natural or synthetic forms of vitamin A that may have the ability to destroy or inhibit the growth of cancer cells.
- Flaxseed- Phytoestrogens are naturally occurring compounds that lower circulating estrogens in the body. Flaxseed is particularly high in one phytoestrogen, lignan, which may have the ability to stop the growth of breast cancer tumors through inhibition of estrogen production.

Screening Tests: What You Need and When

<p>Mammograms</p> 	<p>Starting at age 40, it is important to have a mammogram every 1 to 2 years.</p>
<p>Pap Smears</p>	<p>A Pap smear is recommended every 1 to 3 years if you have been sexually active or are older than 21.</p>
<p>Cholesterol Checks</p> 	<p>Beginning at age 45, have your cholesterol checked regularly. If you smoke, have diabetes, or if heart disease runs in the family, begin to get your cholesterol checked at age 20.</p>
<p>Blood Pressure</p>	<p>It is recommended that women get their blood pressure checked at least every 2 years.</p>
<p>Colorectal Cancer Tests</p>	<p>Starting at age 50, it is important to have a test for colorectal cancer. Your doctor can help you decide which test is right for you.</p>
<p>Diabetes Tests</p> 	<p>If you have high blood pressure or high cholesterol, a screening test for diabetes is recommended.</p>
<p>Depression</p>	<p>If you've felt "down," sad, or hopeless, and have felt little interest or pleasure in doing things for 2 weeks or longer, talk to your doctor about whether he or she can screen you for depression.</p>
<p>Osteoporosis Tests</p> 	<p>A bone density test is recommended at the age of 65 to screen for osteoporosis (thinning of the bones). If you are between the ages of 60 and 64 and weigh 154 pounds or less, talk with your doctor about whether you should be tested.</p>
<p>Chlamydia Tests and Tests for Other Sexually Transmitted Diseases</p>	<p>If you are 25 years or younger and sexually active, you should have a test for Chlamydia.</p>

What Else Can You Do to Stay Healthy?

<p>Eat a Healthy Diet</p>	<p>Diets rich in fruits and vegetables may reduce the risk of cancer and other chronic diseases. Fruits and vegetables provide essential vitamins and minerals, fiber, and other substances that are important for good health. Drink plenty of water and go easy on salt, sugar, alcohol, and saturated fat.</p>
<p>Be Physically Active</p> 	<p>Regular physical activity substantially reduces the risk of dying from coronary heart disease, the nation's leading cause of death. Regular physical activity also decreases the risk for stroke, colon cancer, diabetes, and high blood pressure. Physical activity doesn't have to be strenuous to be beneficial. Moderate-intensity physical activity, such as 20-30 minutes of brisk walking on most days of the week, provides health benefits.</p>
<p>Stay at a Healthy Weight</p>	<p>To lose or maintain weight, a balanced diet is recommended low in saturated fat, with healthy food choices, and small serving sizes, combined with exercise.</p>
<p>Drink Alcohol Only In Moderation</p>	<p>If you drink alcohol, no more than one drink a day is recommended. If you are pregnant, avoid alcohol completely. Currently, it is not known how much alcohol will cause harm to a fetus. Therefore, it's best not to drink <u>any</u> alcohol while pregnant.</p>
<p>Manage Stress</p> 	<p>Although short-lived or infrequent times of stress pose little risk, unresolved stressful situations can pose many problems. Long-term stress can keep your body on a constant state of "on," increasing the rate of wear and tear to body systems. It's believed that stress plays an important role in the development of several types of chronic health problems, especially cardiovascular disease, musculoskeletal disorders, and psychological disorders.</p>
<p>Be Smoke-free</p>	<p>Quitting smoking at any point in life has great benefits. Not only will you live longer and live better, but quitting will actually lower your chances of having a heart attack, stroke, or cancer. If you are pregnant, quitting smoking will greatly improve not only your health, but your baby's as well.</p>
<p>Plan ahead for Pregnancy</p> 	<p>Are you thinking of becoming pregnant? It is important to be sure to take folic acid daily, before, during, and after pregnancy to decrease the risk for certain birth defects. In fact, this is a guideline in which <u>all</u> women of child-bearing age should follow, throughout life.</p>

Should You Take Medicines to Prevent Disease?

Hormones	Recent studies have found that the risk of taking the combined hormones estrogen and progestin after menopause to prevent long-term illnesses seems to out-weight the benefits.
Breast Cancer Drugs	If a close relative has had breast cancer (mother, sister, or daughter), then talk to your doctor about the risks and benefits associated with taking medications to prevent breast cancer.
Aspirin	If you are older than 45 and have high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, or if you smoke, talk to your doctor about taking aspirin to prevent heart disease.
Immunizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have a flu shot every year starting at age 50• Have a tetanus-diphtheria shot every 10 years• Have a pneumonia shot once at age 65• Talk to your doctor to see whether you need hepatitis B shots.

Pennington Nutrition Series, Number 17, 2005

Authors:

Heli Roy, PhD, RD
Shanna Lundy, BS
Beth Kalicki

Division of Education

Phillip Brantley, PhD, Director
Pennington Biomedical Research Center
Claude Bouchard, PhD, Executive Director

7/05

Edited : October 2009

References:

<http://www.ahrq.gov/ppip/healthywom.htm>

<http://www.cdc.gov/od/spotlight/nwhw/works/action.htm>

<http://www.mayoclinic.com>

The Pennington Biomedical Research Center is a world-renowned nutrition research center.

Mission:

To promote healthier lives through research and education in nutrition and preventive medicine.

The Pennington Center has several research areas, including:

Clinical Obesity Research
Experimental Obesity
Functional Foods
Health and Performance Enhancement
Nutrition and Chronic Diseases
Nutrition and the Brain
Dementia, Alzheimer's and healthy aging
Diet, exercise, weight loss and weight loss maintenance

The research fostered in these areas can have a profound impact on healthy living and on the prevention of common chronic diseases, such as heart disease, cancer, diabetes, hypertension and osteoporosis.

The Division of Education provides education and information to the scientific community and the public about research findings, training programs and research areas, and coordinates educational events for the public on various health issues.

We invite people of all ages and backgrounds to participate in the exciting research studies being conducted at the Pennington Center in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. If you would like to take part, visit the clinical trials web page at www.pbrc.edu or call (225) 763-3000.