

Wellness Ways

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Fruit and Vegetables Still Important in Fighting Disease

A recent study of breast cancer survivors determined eating more than the daily recommended portions of fruits and vegetables did not help them avoid recurrent breast cancer or death. Initially disappointed in results of the seven-year study, researchers point to another major benefit of eating additional fruits and vegetables: weight control.

Since obesity is a risk factor for breast cancer and breast cancer recurrence in post-menopausal women, then it stands to reason a diet high in fruits and vegetables and low in fat can help women lose weight and reduce that risk. High fat diets help trigger the hormone estrogen, which can fuel tumor growth.

Bottom line: it pays to eat healthy and eat at least the recommended five to nine servings of fruits and vegetables daily. Ongoing research shows some fruits and vegetables have even more benefits than others. Topping the list of many cancer fighting menus are **cruciferous vegetables**, which include broccoli, bok choy, cabbage, cauliflower, collard and mustard greens, kale, radishes and turnips.

- **Broccoli** and its naturally grown offspring **broccoli sprouts** contain a chemical that helps our bodies produce enzymes believed to destroy carcinogens. They also contain a compound researchers believe reduces the risk of hormone dependent cancers such as of the breast, ovaries and prostate. Broccoli sprouts are sold in the fresh produce sections of grocery stores.

Some research studies have shown that **cabbage**, both raw and slightly cooked, may also help reduce the risk of breast cancer. Like broccoli and its sprouts, cabbage contains a chemical that helps limit cancer growth.

Early Detection Winning Race to Reduce Breast Cancer Deaths

Breast cancer awareness and screenings have joined forces to help reduce the number of American women and men diagnosed with the disease each year. Even with these efforts, it remains the second-leading cause of death among American women and is expected to kill nearly 40,500 women and 450 men by the end of 2007.

Odds are 1 in 8 that a woman will face breast cancer at some point in her life. But those odds look better each day as improved treatments and treatment combinations, better imaging and testing and heightened awareness and education evolve.

What can you do to improve the odds? Here is an early breast cancer detection plan recommended by the National Breast Cancer Foundation:

- Starting in your early 20s, get training in breast self examinations. Understanding how your body feels normally will help you spot changes if they occur. Health experts debate the value of self exams and the American Cancer Society classifies them as optional (see related story on this page). If you opt to perform them, do them monthly.
- Get a clinical breast examination every three years from ages 20 to 39, then every year after. These examinations are usually done at the same time as a pap smear.
- Get a baseline mammogram by age 40, earlier if you have any risk factors such as family history.
- Follow up with a mammogram every one to two years from 40 to 49.
- Get an annual mammogram from age 50 forward.
- Keep an updated personal calendar recording breast self exams, clinical breast exams, mammograms and doctor appointments.
- Additionally, it's a good idea to keep a list of questions to ask at routine screenings. For example, does your doctor's hospital or clinic offer digital mammography, the latest in breast imaging technology?

The best bullets on any early detection plan checklist always start with the patient – a low fat diet, consistent exercise, and no smoking or drinking are health care musts.

Breast Self Examinations - Are Necessary and What is the Best Method?

During her routine breast self examination, a 48-year-old woman felt something unfamiliar in her left breast. A small lump – the size of an eraser at the end of a pencil – wasn't there last time she checked.

Filled with anxiety and fear, the woman went to her doctor and was diagnosed with early stage breast cancer. Her case is **not** the norm. About eight out of 10 breast lumps are not cancerous, according to the National Breast Cancer Foundation.

In this woman's case, the self-discovered lump led her to visit a doctor and likely helped save her life. Today, she is a 20-year breast cancer survivor.

Debate continues to swirl today about the benefit of breast self exams. Some physicians and researchers argue the exams increase anxiety and unnecessary surgeries. Studies have shown the exams do not lower the risk of dying from breast cancer. Some physicians fear breast self exams might keep women from getting standard medical screenings.

But for more than 50 years, breast self examinations have often been a first line of defense in detecting changes and seeking medical care. The American Cancer Society (ACS) recommends women in their early 20s learn about the benefits and limitations of breast self examinations – but the organization classifies them as optional.

Women who *do* perform monthly self exams should always back them with routine breast cancer screenings, including clinical breast examinations – usually conducted at the time of annual pap smears – and mammograms, says the ACS.

Women who decide to make breast self exams part of their regular health care should learn the proper way to perform the exam from a doctor or nurse. Experts disagree on the best time of month to perform the exam, but the ACS recommends breast self exams immediately following a period, or, for those with irregular periods, on the same day each month. Steps to follow are:

- Lie down, pillow under right shoulder and right arm behind head
- Use upper part of three middle fingers of left hand to feel for lumps or thickening; use light, medium then firm pressure and repeat same circular pattern to cover entire area
- Repeat procedure on left breast
- Check armpits for lumps; arm slightly raised (sitting or standing works)
- Examine breasts again while standing – many women perform this part while showering

For more information on breast self examinations and to schedule a clinical screening or mammogram, contact Wellness Services at 713-441-5978 or visit www.methodistcorporatewellness.com.

Broccoli Cabbage Slaw

- 1 small package chopped cabbage
- 1 small package broccoli slaw
- 2 medium apples chopped in small pieces
- ¼ cup sunflower seeds
- ¼ cup raisins
- ½ to ¾ cup favorite salad dressing

Mix together the slaws, add chopped apples, seeds and raisins and stir in salad dressing to taste. Poppyseed dressing is a good choice. Chill for an hour before serving. Easy and fast. Great salad to take to parties.



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