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## **Promoting Breast Health**

*by Dr. Patricia J. Wales, ND*

The known risk factors for breast cancer development (including family history, genetics, and prolonged exposure to estrogen) account for only 30% of women diagnosed with breast cancer. The factors affecting the rest appear to be related to lifestyle choices that we individually have the power to change. Reducing the negative effects of chronic stress and optimizing immune function are powerful tools in minimizing the chances of developing cancer. Effective strategies include

- **Exercise** - four hours per week can result in a 37% reduction in risk for breast cancer.
- **Stop Smoking**
- **Increase Your Veggies** - 5-8 servings a day. Include green, red, yellow and orange ones to increase your consumption of anti-oxidant compounds.
- **Eat More Broccoli** - And cabbage, brussel sprouts, kale, and collard greens. These are high in a plant compound that makes estrogen less dangerous to breast tissue.
- **Choose Organic Foods** - certain herbicides and pesticides on produce as well as hormones found in conventional meats have been implicated in breast cancer.
- **Eliminate hydrogenated fats** - Choose organic butter instead of margarine, and use olive oil and flax oil instead of refined oils.
- **Decrease or Avoid Sugar** - Sugar depresses the immune system.
- **Take Multivitamins** - A high quality multivitamin for healthy immune, adrenal and thyroid function.
- **Improve lymphatic circulation** - dry skin brushing and rebounder exercises help your body to eliminate toxins.
- **Take off your Bra** - wearing a bra for more than 12 hours a day increases breast cancer risk by a factor of 6. Cotton stretchy bras without underwire allow more movement of the breasts, allowing better removal of toxins from the breasts by the lymphatic system.
- **Know your Breasts** - get to know your breasts with gentle massage when you apply body lotion after a daily bath or shower. Even better is applying castor oil externally on the breasts to increase lymphatic circulation, break down adhesions and increase immune cell activity in the tissues.) Being familiar with the feel of your breast tissue will help you be more comfortable and effective when you perform breast self-exams.
- **Limit radiation exposure** - Repeated X-ray exposures may increase the risk of breast cancer. Using Infrared Thermography as a screening tool is particularly useful for women in their 20's to 40's since mammography is not seen as being accurate in detecting breast cancer in this age group.
- **Practice Self-Nurturance** - The breasts symbolize nurturance. Many times women are so busy taking care of others that they forget to listen to their own needs.

In addition to these general guidelines, a Naturopathic Doctor can offer more specific recommendations and assessments based on your individual needs. Remember, it can take ten years for breast cancer cells to multiply and grow to a detectable size.

Breast Thermography provides a modern way to monitor breast health and provide early detection of abnormal tissue changes. Coupled with natural strategies to encourage healthy breast function, we can have a powerful program for breast health and comfort throughout our lives. There is no time like the present to take charge of your life, for the sake of you and your breasts.