

MANAGED CARE EMPLOYEE WELLNESS NEWSLETTER



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Breast cancer and diet: Is there a link?



Google "breast cancer diet" and you'll find dozens, if not hundreds, of links to diet plans that claim to reduce your risk of breast cancer. But can the right diet really prevent breast cancer or improve your chance or survival if you have breast cancer? Unfortunately, we just don't know for sure.

One of the most controversial questions is whether or not a low-fat diet reduces the risk of breast cancer. Big population studies suggest that fat consumption is linked to breast cancer risk.

That is, populations with higher fat intake have higher breast cancer rates. But clinical trials designed to test this theory have been inconclusive.

Soy is another area of controversy. Soy contains phytoestrogens that can act as weak estrogens in the human body. Some believe that soy estrogens may stimulate the growth of estrogen-sensitive cancers. Others argue that the weaker soy estrogens are protective because they block the activity of stronger human estrogen. Studies have yet to convincingly prove the case one way or another but to be on the safe side, most experts recommend soy foods be consumed in moderation.

People who eat more fruits and vegetables and less red meat have a reduced risk of cancer overall—although scientists have so far been unable to pinpoint exactly which foods or combinations of foods may be responsible. There's no doubt that fruits and vegetables are full of antioxidants and cancer-fighting nutrients. But so far, the protective benefits of individual foods or nutrients have only been shown in the laboratory or in animals, not in humans. Studies on nutritional supplements have been particularly disappointing.

Despite what the magazines and book authors may claim, there is no convincing proof that any particular diet or combination of foods reduces your risk of breast cancer specifically. But that doesn't mean there's nothing you can do. In fact, there are three things you can do that will DEFINITELY reduce your risk of breast cancer and improve your odds of survival if you are diagnosed.

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The best breast cancer prevention diet



The best breast cancer prevention diet is the one that helps you maintain a healthy weight. Being overweight is a primary risk factor for breast cancer. In addition to containing cancer-fighting compounds, fruits and vegetables are low in calories. Eating more fruits and vegetables can help you lose weight and improve your nutritional status at the same time.

The next most important thing you can do to reduce your risk is to limit your consumption of alcohol to no more than one drink per day. If you do drink alcohol, be sure that you are getting enough folic acid. A large study conducted in Australia suggests that adequate folic acid intake can negate the increased breast cancer risk associated with moderate alcohol consumption.

And, finally, your breast cancer prevention diet should include at least 30 minutes of physical activity every day. Studies show that moderate exercise is highly protective against breast cancer and vastly improves survival rates among women with breast cancer.

People with Social Phobia Have Different Self-Image MRI reveals altered brain response to negative comments



The brains of people with generalized social phobia actually respond differently than those of other people when reading criticism about them, a new report says.

Using MRI, researchers from the U.S. National Institute of Mental Health found that people with this anxiety disorder experienced increased blood flow in their medial prefrontal cortex and amygdala when reading negative statements about themselves. The prefrontal cortex and the amygdala are sections of the brain tied to awareness of oneself, as well as fear, emotion and stress response.

However, when they read negative comments about others or neutral or positive comments about themselves or others, the change in blood flow did not occur. The report is published in the October issue of the *Archives of General Psychiatry*.

Generalized social phobia, the most common anxiety disorder in the general population, is marked by a person fearing and avoiding social situations and fearing negative judgment by others, the authors noted in background information in the report. Those with the disorder run a greater risk of depression, abuse of alcohol and drugs, and suicide attempts.

The authors concluded that the finding may guide the future development of therapies and treatments for the disorder. *-msn.com*

The Secret Benefits of Massage: The Easiest Way to Combat Stress & Fight Fat

It's true what we're learning. Stress can cause you to store fat right where you want it the least--in the belly. And what fights stress better than a luxurious massage? It may be the single most enjoyable way to keep the weight off.

If you think adding massage to your lifestyle sounds too good to be true, let's look at how and why it works:

High Anxiety = Heavy Anxiety

Tension and stress lead directly to weight gain. Stress produces the cortisol hormone. Cortisol, besides causing major damage to tissue and nerves when stored up, also signals the production of insulin. Some extra insulin sounds harmless enough, except that it tells your body to store fat in the abdomen. To fight this, you can either burn off the cortisol through exercise (still recommended by the way), or keep it from producing in the first place by staying relaxed. Like, say, through a massage.

Junk Food Is No Accident

Storing more fat isn't the only outcome of needless insulin production. It also causes you to crave sugary, high carb foods and snacks. So maybe those traumatic urges to binge aren't just in your head. They're biological reactions to stress. More massage means fewer munching binges.

TLC For Your Muscles

Finally, the touch and pressure of massage stimulates blood flow and may help boost your metabolism. You can actually feel your body temperature rise during a massage. And we all know what a higher metabolism can do for keeping weight off. Not only that, but the contact loosens your muscles, which helps with muscle tone and appearance. Sure, it comes with great mental benefits of well-being, peacefulness and human connection.



Men's Corner: 6 Great Foods for Men

Nutrition tips to improve mood, memory, muscles and more



Listen up, guys. If you'd like to improve your mood, memory, muscles, and more, forget expensive and potentially risky supplements. Head to your local supermarket; you'll find foods that help prevent age-related health conditions. As an added bonus, they all taste great and are easy to incorporate into your diet.

Sardines for Heart Health Ounce for ounce, sardines are one of the best sources for heart-healthy omega-3 fatty acids and are extremely low in contaminants such as mercury and PCBs. They're also eco-friendly, packed with protein, and low in saturated fat. Canned versions are inexpensive, portable, and don't require refrigeration. Choose no-salt-added brands, and keep the bones in for a third of your recommended daily calcium. Sardines are great on salads or layered on top of whole-grain crackers.

Brazil Nuts For Prostate Health Brazil nuts are one of the richest food sources of selenium, a mineral that may reduce a man's risk of developing prostate cancer. Selenium may be toxic if taken in daily doses of more than 400 micrograms (mcg). But one Brazil nut has about 100 mcg. One or two mixed with other nuts each day will give you just the right amount.

Edamame For Mood Mood is affected by a combination of factors; including brain chemistry, life events, and the foods you eat. Of these, only diet is under your control. Fiber-rich carbohydrates such as oats and edamame (green soybeans in the pod) help prevent mood fluctuations by keeping your blood-sugar levels steady. Edamame also contain protein, which further helps stabilize blood sugar, and omega-3 fatty acids, which have been shown to help combat depression. You can find them in just about any Japanese restaurant. They often come heavily salted, so request them "nude" or lightly coated. You also can buy frozen edamame pods at health-food stores and many supermarkets. Take 'em home, boil, drain, and enjoy!

Sesame Seeds They're inexpensive, safe, and don't require a prescription. They're also very rich in the amino acid arginine, which is involved in synthesizing nitric oxide, a compound that enhances blood flow through the arteries and—ahem—to various other male body parts. Toasted sesame seeds add a nice nutty taste to salads, cooked grains, or cereal. You also can enjoy them in hummus, which is made with ground chickpeas and sesame seed paste (called tahini).

Blueberries For Memory These days, it seems you can't say enough about the health benefits of blueberries. But did you know that much of their power lies in their color? That deep blue hue is caused by flavonoids: natural compounds that protect the brain's memory-carrying cells (neurons) from the negative effects of oxidation and inflammation. Buy firm-fleshed berries or, off-season, try frozen, unsweetened varieties. Eat with plain yogurt, as a topping for cereal, or right out of the bowl.

Lentils For Energy Rich in fiber and protein—both of which are digested slowly—lentils provide a steady source of energy. They're also a good source of several B vitamins essential to energy production, as well as iron, which helps red blood cells carry oxygen. Try whipping up a big batch of lentil soup, and you'll have a hearty lunch for days.

What a man accomplishes in a day depends upon the way in which he approaches his tasks - Arland Gilbert

Allergy Tips for the Season

Don't Let Symptoms Prevent You from Enjoying the Weather



Every season of the year brings new obstacles to allergy sufferers. Whether you suffer from seasonal allergies (such as sensitivity to pollen in the spring or mold in the fall), or allergies that are a nuisance in every season (like pet dander and dust mites), there are plenty of things you can do to lessen your symptoms year-round.

Fall Allergy Tips

Fall allergies are usually caused by weeds that pollinate in the late summer and early fall. Depending on your location, you could be affected by ragweed, sagebrush and tumbleweed in the fall, as well as some trees that pollinate in cooler weather. Molds thrive in damp piles of rotting leaves, making the fall a prime time for anyone with a mold allergy.

If you have fall allergies, here are some ways to cope:

- Avoid yard work, such as gardening and raking. This stirs up pollens and mold spores, making an allergic reaction more likely.
- Have a professional service clean out your gutters if they are full of wet, moldy leaves.
- Don't over-water your houseplants as wet soil encourages mold growth.
- Remove any visibly moldy carpet or belongings and wash any moldy areas (such as the bathroom) with a solution of one part bleach to 20 parts water.

Winter Allergy Tips

Winter allergies are associated with sensitivities to mold and dust mites. Because people tend to spend most of their time indoors during the winter, they are exposed to these allergens around the clock. If you suffer from winter allergies, these tips will help:

- If you have a wood-burning fireplace, store your wood outside. Only burn logs that appear to be free of mold.
- Keep fresh-cut trees and greens (such as Christmas trees or wreaths) outside for a few days to help reduce the amount of mold they bring into the house. Even if you use artificial trees or wreaths, they can still become moldy and dusty over the years, so clean them outside before decorating.
- Clean all holiday decorations before putting them out for display, as they may have collected mold and dust during storage. Do this outside to prevent the spread of allergens throughout your house.
- Wash fabric decorations in hot, soapy water before putting them on display. Protect your nose and mouth with a paper mask while washing the items, if necessary.
- Consider purchasing an air filtration system with a HEPA (High Efficiency Particulate Air) filter to reduce the amount of dust and dust mites in your home.
- Use a vacuum with a multi-layered filter bag and clean often to remove allergens from your carpet.
- Remove as much carpet from your home as possible since carpet holds and traps dust and allergens. Replace carpet with smooth-surface floors (wood, tile, laminate, etc.), which are easier to clean, to reduce exposure even more.

If you suffer from allergies, it's important to talk to your doctor. Lifestyle changes and other tips can only help so much, but your doctor can help you develop a treatment plan that works for you. Don't let allergies stop you from enjoying the best of every season!

Kids' Health: Why Some Kids Are Bullied From the Start

Study finds early aggression, harsh parenting, economic status combine to make a victim

Up to one in 10 children fall into ongoing patterns of abuse and victimization by peers starting almost as soon as they are old enough to begin socializing with others, a new study suggests.

The report, published in the October issue of the *Archives of General Psychiatry*, found that aggressive infants, and those from low-income families or exposed to harsh parenting styles, were more likely to be consistently victimized.

"The consequences associated with high and chronic victimization are manifold and include depression, loneliness, low self-esteem, physical health problems, social withdrawal, alcohol and/or drug use, school absence and avoidance, decrease in school performance, self-harm and suicidal ideation [thoughts and behaviors]," wrote the researchers, a team from the University of Alabama.

The abuse from school-age peers could be in the form of physical attacks, harsh words and social aggression, according to background information in the article.

The researchers studied 1,970 children -- about half boys -- born in Montreal between October 1997 and July 1998. The team followed them for more than seven years, receiving information from the children's mothers about victimization, family adversity, parenting styles, physical aggression, hyperactivity, and internalizing symptoms. During the final follow-up, at age 7, the children and their teachers reported on victimization by classmates.

The study found that children who were aggressive at 17 months of age were more likely to become victims in preschool than their less aggressive peers. Children exposed to harsh parenting were more likely to be chronic victims, as were those from poorer families.

"These results suggest that early preventive interventions should target both child- and parent-level risks, and focus on alternatives to harsh and aggressive interactions," the author wrote.

- HealthDay



Recipe of the Month: Avocado Salsa



Ingredients:

1 ripe avocado, peeled and diced
 2 tablespoons lime juice
 1 large tomato, diced
 1 yellow bell pepper, diced
 1/2 cup diced red onion
 1 jalapeno pepper, seeds and membranes removed, minced
 1 clove garlic, minced
 1/4 cup (packed) cilantro leaves, chopped
 1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper
 Salt to taste

Instructions:

1. Place avocado and lime juice in large bowl and toss gently to coat. (This will help to keep the avocado from browning.)
2. Add tomato, yellow pepper, onion, jalapeno, garlic, cilantro, and black pepper. Toss gently to combine.
3. Add salt to taste.

Yield: 4 servings
3 POINT per serving

Nutritional Information:

Per serving: calories 118, fat 7g, protein 3g, carbohydrates 12g

-Stayhealthy-livewell.com

Food of the Month: Avocados



Salsa is one of the healthiest condiments you can eat. It's low-fat, anti-inflammatory, and packed with antioxidants and other valuable phytonutrients. Now, a study shows that eating avocados or guacamole will help you get more of the nutritional benefits from salsa. Talk about a win-win!

One of the anti-oxidants you get in salsa is beta-carotene. Because beta-carotene is a fat-soluble nutrient, your body will absorb it more efficiently if you eat it together with some form of fat. That's where the avocado comes in.

Avocados are high in vitamin E and mono-unsaturated fats, the "heart healthy" fats. Researchers found that when people eat some guacamole along with their salsa (or a sliced avocado on their salad), they absorbed significantly more beta-carotene, as well as more lutein, lycopene, and zeaxanthin. In fact, the researchers found that when these nutrients were consumed in a fat free meal, very little was absorbed.

So, to get the most out of your veggies, add a little avocado to the meal. It's not only more nutritious, it's also delicious.

Upcoming Managed Care Wellness Events:

November 10th, 2008, 12:00pm-1:00pm: Lunch and Learn, Herbal Remedies, Estay Greene, PharmD

November 12th, 2008, 12:00pm-1:00pm: Wellness Grand Rounds, Gaining the Physical Edge, Jeffrey J. Ciolek PT ATC