



Reducing the Risk

Patients always ask how they can reduce their risk of breast cancer. Many of the risk factors are out of their control, but here is a tip that can lower the risk of breast cancer.

Studies report that physical activity reduces the odds of getting breast cancer by up to 30%. Other studies show that women diagnosed with breast cancer who average four hours of exercise per week are less likely to have their cancer return or spread than women who have less than 1.5 hours per week of physical activity. Exercise can help avoid weight gain and improve chances of survival. Spring is here and we should encourage our patients to "move for the cure".

Sandy Schwark, R.N., BSN

Aspirin Cuts Death Risk After Breast Cancer: U.S. Study

Breast Cancer survivors who take aspirin regularly may be less likely to die or have their cancer return, U.S. researchers reported. The study of more than 4,000 nurses showed that those who took aspirin, usually to prevent heart disease, had a 50 percent lower risk of dying from breast cancer and a 50 percent lower risk that the cancer would spread.

"This is the first study to find that aspirin can significantly reduce the risk of cancer spread and death for women who have been treated for early stage breast cancer," said Dr. Michelle Holmes of Harvard Medical School, who led the study published in the journal of Clinical Oncology.

"If these findings are confirmed in other clinical trials, taking aspirin may become another simple, low-cost and relatively safe tool to help women with breast cancer live longer, healthier lives."

Holmes and her team studied 4,164 female registered nurses taking part in the Nurses' Health Study, an ongoing analysis of a wide range of health issues. They started in 1976, looking at who took aspirin, watching for breast cancer and all causes of death until 2006. Over this time, 341 of the nurses died of breast cancer. Women who took aspirin two to five days a week had a 60 percent reduced risk of their cancer spreading and a

71 percent lower risk of breast cancer death. Six to seven aspirins a week lowered the risk of spread by 43 percent and the risk of breast cancer death by 64 percent. Most of the women were taking low-dose aspirin to prevent heart attacks and stroke.

Other drugs in the same class as aspirin, such as non-steroidal inflammatory drugs or NSAID's, (ibuprofen and naproxen), also apparently lowered the risks. However, there was not enough data on these drugs to give a clear answer. Acetaminophen is not included in this group.

The researchers said they are not sure how aspirin and other NSAIDS may affect tumors but it could be by lowering inflammation. Other studies have shown that aspirin and ibuprofen can lower colon cancer risk.

(Maggie Fox, Health and Science Editor)

Breast Cancer Tidbits:

- *The best time for a mammogram is about one week after the last menstrual cycle, when a woman's breasts are least tender.*
- *Only 30% of all breast cancer cases occur in women who have an identifiable risk factor.*
- *Myth - If you do not feel a lump, you do not have breast cancer.*
- *Myth—The older you get the less likely you will face breast cancer.*