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Breast Cancer: Risk Factors and Preventative Measures

Survivors, family members, friends, and even football teams sport the color pink during the month of October in an effort to raise awareness for breast cancer. Not only is it the most common type of cancer in women, but it's also the leading cause of female cancer deaths.



AUTHOR

Lucas Tims, ND, FABNO

You probably haven't given breast cancer much thought unless you yourself or someone close to you has been diagnosed. However, with a 1 in 8 chance that a woman will develop breast cancer in her lifetime, it may be time to take notice. This trend is very alarming and it's important to understand the risk factors and steps you can take toward breast cancer prevention.



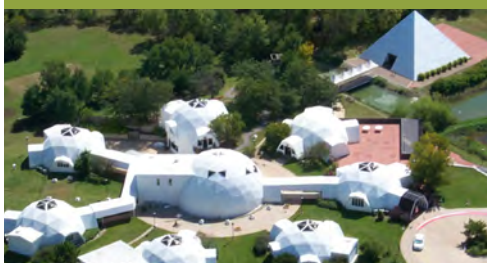
Early detection matters, but mammograms aren't the only option

Conventional medicine has recommended the mammogram as a breast cancer screening tool for years. While mammograms have been shown to make a difference in some populations, there are risks involved because of radiation exposure and the possibility of false positives. When false positives occur, it can result in unnecessary biopsies, overtreatment, and of course unnecessary stress and fear.

PREVENTION IS JUST AS IMPORTANT (IF NOT MORE!) AS DETECTION

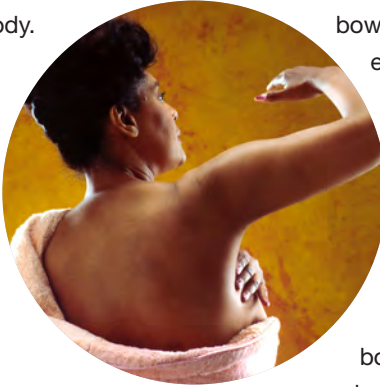
There are some newer early detection methods that show a lot of promise. One being full body MRI's that don't involve radiation or contrast agents. They are a more sensitive and are a more specific screening method with a lower risk of false positives. These methods aren't FDA approved yet, but I do believe they will be widely used in the future.

Continued on page 2



Riordan Clinic is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3), nutrition-based health facility with locations in Wichita, Overland Park, and Hays, KS. The clinic was co-founded by Olive Garvey and Hugh D. Riordan. We have integrated lifestyle and nutrition to help you find the underlying causes of your illness. Since our inception in 1975, the mission has been clear and unwavering to "...stimulate an epidemic of health."

Another tool, that the Riordan Clinic uses, is thermography. Thermography uses an infrared camera to detect subtle variations of heat radiating from the surface of the body. The heat variations can be an indicator of infection, inflammation or presence of cancer cells. It's important to note that thermography is not a diagnostic tool, but it may pick up on early signs of cancer growth. However, I don't typically rely on thermography results alone to determine if someone is in the clear. Things such as blood markers, self-exam results, and personal risk factors must also be considered alongside thermography.



Prevention before detection

A lot of emphasis is placed on early detection, but there is little talk about prevention. It's like how back in the day smokers were encouraged to get regular chest x-rays to rule out lung cancer. Yet, there was no mention of quitting smoking. This approach simply doesn't make sense. **Women need to think proactively about things like diet, exercise, sleep, environmental exposures, and the like. There are several low-cost, everyday actions you can take to lower your risk of developing breast cancer.**



Eat real food, and lots of plants

When it comes to diet, it is best to avoid processed food, added or refined sugars, and eating organic whenever possible. It's important to load up on phytonutrients, which are the natural compounds found in plant foods.

These nutrients help repair our DNA on a daily basis, which is essential for long-lasting health. Tumors form when you've gone way too long without repairing the DNA of the cells in a certain part of the body. We are almost constantly undergoing DNA damage and mitochondrial dysfunction that leads to that DNA damage. However, if you can withstand a certain amount of damage and your diet and lifestyle allow for that repair to happen, it may not have as big an impact on your health or lead to tumor development.

Reduce your chemical exposure

Chemical exposure can also be a major contributor to the development of breast cancer because of the impact certain chemicals have on hormones, including estrogen that can enhance cancer growth. Plastics, pesticides, and many of the chemicals found in personal care items that are used every single day are just a few examples of chemical exposures and endocrine disruptors that most women encounter on a regular basis.

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You can begin to reduce your exposure, but chemicals will always be around. Luckily, there are other practices that

can help the body's natural detoxification mechanisms. Focus on movement - move your body, move your blood, and move your bowels to help facilitate proper detoxification. Regular exercise is one of the easiest ways to make this happen. Other things like sauna and lymphatic massage can also be helpful.

Rethink your birth control

Progestins are synthetic forms of the hormone progesterone that is naturally produced in a woman's body. Many birth control pills and some hormone replacement drugs contain progestins. Some studies are linking progestins and breast cancer. While the research isn't conclusive, it may be one risk factor you can eliminate by replacing your birth control or hormone replacement with a different form.



Manage your metabolism

Being overweight is a big risk factor for breast cancer and there are other complications that can arise as a result of having excess body fat. Furthermore, if a woman is in the pre-diabetic or diabetic range, insulin rises and can act as fuel for cancer cells.

Nearly half of the U.S. population is considered obese and once people get to that state it can be very tough to reverse. It often requires some pretty drastic diet and lifestyle changes. It's not always the food you are eating that contributes to the problem, but chemicals, endocrine disruptors, carcinogens affect on metabolic health, and the body's ability to store and utilize calories and nutrients. The extra fat then houses some of these toxins and essentially becomes its own chemical factory, creating a vicious cycle.

Taking steps to eat better, exercise, and detoxify are essential if you are a woman carrying excess weight. Working with a health coach or a personal trainer along with your medical provider can help you stay motivated.



Get Your Vitamin D

Low Vitamin D levels are a common characteristic of many women diagnosed with breast cancer and there are certain populations of women who are prone to deficiency. Women who are overweight have higher Vitamin D requirements, and women from ethnicities with darker skin are at higher risk for Vitamin D deficiency. Our

bodies make Vitamin D naturally with adequate sun exposure, but most of us spend a lot of time indoors, especially in the winter. Supplementing with Vitamin D is an easy way to make sure your levels are in the preventative range. Our Vitamin D3/K2 supplement is one I recommend to a lot of my patients.

Throw everything at it

When it comes to prevention, the more you can do the better. If you can improve your diet, exercise, detox regularly, and lower your stress levels the compound effect is greater than just doing one of those things. However, starting with one is better than nothing at all. If you feel that you are at a particularly high risk for breast cancer, then a more aggressive plan may be necessary. Working with a provider to help guide you and determine the highest priorities will make it easier than trying to figure it all out on your own.

The main takeaways I want to emphasize are that there are a lot of things that you can control to help lower your risk of developing breast cancer and prevention is just as important (if not more!) as detection.

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Getting Started with Anticancer Living



AUTHOR

Jenny Bradley

Taking steps toward anticancer living can feel daunting. Emotions are already charged, energy feels quickly depleted, and life suddenly has an entire new curriculum as you deal with everything that comes along with a cancer diagnosis. As a cancer patient myself, I am very familiar with those challenges and I too felt overwhelmed in the beginning. If I can pass along any advice, it would be this:

JUST GET STARTED.

When faced with a cancer diagnosis, diving head first into major lifestyle changes might feel necessary, but also very cumbersome when added to the multitude of things we are already dealing with. However, reframing the way we view it can make all the difference. Rather than viewing the change as a daunting overhaul, view them as a progressive journey of small helpful & healthful steps.

Major lifestyle changes don't necessarily happen all at once and last forever. Nor do most of us have all the necessary resources to overhaul our entire life at one time. (Can I get an amen?!) The first month after I was diagnosed with breast cancer, my husband and I made a list of priorities that we could modify. We based our decisions on the insights from my lab work and the Riordan Clinic team input. We also considered what other patients who were farther along on their healing journey deemed helpful.

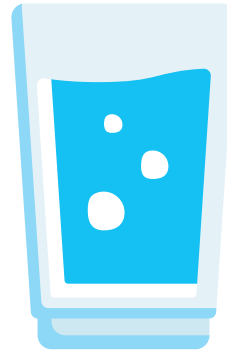
We didn't try to change everything all at once. We first focused on the things we consumed.



The first starting point was to be intentional about what we consumed with our eyes and ears.

I stopped watching 24-hour news channels, listening to things that weren't edifying or didn't make me smile, and quit following social media accounts that would cause me to feel fight or flight emotions and responses.

This also helped me learn to tune into my body and listen to the cues my own cells gave me in responding to outside stimuli.



Next, we focused on what we were eating and drinking.

After reading the EPA's testing results on our local water supply and learning about the importance of hydration for detoxification and healing, we decided that purified, clean drinking water was a foundational piece of the anticancer lifestyle. We agreed purified water

was a top priority, so we allocated resources and purchased a countertop purifier for drinking and cooking water.



Next, we worked to shift our food and drink containers to safer, less toxic vessels.

This meant opting for glass and stainless steel containers instead of plastic (plastic can leach chemicals into our food & drink that can harm us).

I made the choice to never leave the house without my stainless steel tumbler of purified drinking water. If you see me around Riordan Clinic, you'll most likely see me with a tumbler of water in hand! We started saving glass jars to wash and reuse and bought an inexpensive bundle of glass containers with lids.

Working on getting safer containers also meant switching to safer cookware and bakeware.

We got rid of older non-stick coated pots and pans as some of the chemicals used in non-stick coatings have been linked to cancer.



RATHER THAN VIEWING THE CHANGE AS A DAUNTING OVERHAUL, VIEW THEM AS A PROGRESSIVE JOURNEY OF SMALL HELPFUL & HEALTHFUL STEPS.

We did not go switch out everything in our kitchen all at once. We made a prioritized list, invested in the important-to-us pieces first, and upgraded the other items as the months went on.

The same can be said about modifying our diet. We did not come home one day and throw everything away and usher in an entirely new pantry and refrigerated stock all at once. Instead, we started with choosing more organic and plant-focused foods.



As we went grocery shopping each week for fresh produce, we intentionally geared our meal plan to be more plant-focused in order to help fill our bodies with nourishment to use in the healing process.

Cruciferous vegetables like broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, and brussels sprouts quickly became feature items on our plates. Known for their anticancer compounds, these powerhouse vegetables along with garlic, onions, mushrooms, berries, turmeric, and ginger became weekly staples in the shopping cart.

You can read more about the anticancer grocery list in a previous article: riordanclinic.org/2021/05/foods-to-include-in-an-anti-cancer-diet

Our outlook on food consumption became more about intentionally nourishing our bodies and less about restriction. It wasn't about eliminating all the things we used to enjoy. It was about making choices that help support the healing mechanisms our bodies already have in place!

Taking steps toward anticancer living can be a progressive journey, and it doesn't require the perfect plan. You don't have to throw away everything in your pantry all at once, get rid of all your personal care products, and never enjoy ice cream again. Instead, focus on making intentional choices every single day that foster a healing environment in and around you.

PROGRESS over perfection.

Jenny Bradley has been thriving with a cancer diagnosis since 2017. She is a Certified Culinary Nutrition Expert and Certified Holistic Cancer Coach who helps guide overwhelmed cancer patients into more peace through her coaching and courses at shrinkthemutantschool.com. You can find her sharing her cancer triver insights and inside scoop on her Instagram @shrinkthemutant. Jenny is married to her favorite supporter, Mike. They live in Kansas with their cute little dog named Poppy.



We learned about how pesticides (including herbicides, insecticides, rodenticides, and fungicides) can create hormone disruption and cause various harmful effects in the body.

As someone dealing with a hormone-driven cancer, I did not want my body to work any harder on balancing my hormones. I wanted my body working on the cancer, not on working overtime to detox the various harms carried in on the food I was eating.

While the organic label does not mean toxin-free, it does hold a higher standard for what kinds of farming practices are used in the breeding, cultivating, and harvesting process, thus creating a less harmful end product for the consumer.



Breast Cancer Basics: Staging

Many people hear about the different stages of breast cancer and know that the higher the number, the more serious the case. But, what do the stages really mean and how do they drive treatment decisions? We thought it might be helpful to clarify meaning of the different stages of breast cancer and discuss where lifestyle factors and integrative medicine can have the biggest impact.

What is breast cancer staging?

Staging is basically a classification system developed by conventional medicine doctors to establish treatment guidelines based on the anatomical spread of cancer. The stages of breast cancer range from zero up to stage four.



STAGE FOUR

Stage four means that the cancer has spread to other parts of the body and has invaded other organs and tissues such as the, liver, lungs, brain, and bones. This stage is also referred to as advanced or metastatic cancer.

STAGES TWO AND THREE

Stages two and three indicate that cancer has grown more deeply and into nearby tissue, but is still largely confined

to one area. It may also indicate that it has begun to invade the lymph nodes.

STAGE ONE

Stage one, also known as early-stage cancer, means that cancer has not grown into nearby tissue and has not invaded the lymph nodes or other parts of the body.

STAGE ZERO

Not all cancers have stage zero, but breast cancer does. This stage is called ductal or lobular carcinoma in situ which means “in place.” This stage implies that cells with cancerous features are present, but have not yet become invasive. What we know about this stage is that it’s quite common, but only about one in five of these in situ carcinomas will go on to actually become invasive.



The traditional approach, unfortunately, will often treat this stage as if it is invasive, using things like surgery, radiation, and possibly hormone blocking drugs even though it is unlikely to be life

-threatening. The controversy with using invasive treatments is that it may help 20% of the patients with stage zero breast cancer, while being an over-treatment for the other 80%.

There are other risk factors that can impact whether the cancer is going to progress or not. With an early-stage diagnosis, there is a lot that a person can control that may slow down the progression of the tumor and keep them at a lower stage.

Over the course of our duration in practice, we’ve seen women with stage zero breast cancer who have opted not to do conventional treatment, even though they were recommended to. Those patients are the ones that tend to be well suited for going all in from an integrative approach. This shows promise for different approaches for stage zero cancers that go beyond surgery, radiation, chemo and hormone blockers.

Of course, every case is different and the Riordan Clinic always advises a full discussion with your medical provider before deciding which treatments are best for you.

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The Benefits of Turkey Tail Mushroom in Cancer Treatment

“Let food be thy medicine, and let medicine be thy food” a well-known quote by Hippocrates that stands the test of time. When working with cancer patients, we always address nutrition and food. We also use medicinal compounds that are derived from food whenever possible. Coriolus versicolor or Turkey Tail mushroom is one such compound with some impressive research-backed benefits for cancer patients.



AUTHOR

Laura Vasquez, MSN, APRN, NP-C

Coriolus is a multicolored fungus that grows wild in various parts of the world and in the United States. The mushroom is also named Turkey Tail due to the appearance resembling; you guessed it – a turkey tail with rings of brown and tan. Medicinal mushrooms such as Coriolus versicolor have been used for centuries, primarily in Asia, to treat lung diseases and cancer. In Japan, Coriolus is an integral part of the standard cancer treatment plan to help strengthen the immune system and is used alongside other standard treatments.



The most active compound in the Coriolus versicolor, which is responsible for the immune enhancing effects, is Polysaccharide K (PSK). PSK is extracted from the mushroom and taken in capsule form. There have been several promising studies of PSK as an adjunct component of cancer care. The mushroom has been studied on patients with gastric, colorectal, breast and lung cancer. Outcomes showed improved lifespan compared to those who did not take PSK in conjunction with chemotherapy and/or radiation. Studies have also correlated PSK with increased immune system cells that help fight cancer such as natural killer cells (NK). The NK cells enhance various mechanisms to disrupt the cancer

cell cycle and induce cellular death.¹ Those taking Coriolus versicolor report few side effects. It is safe to use in conjunction with chemotherapy agents, radiation, and other supplements. Since this is a member of the fungus family anyone with a mold or allergy to mushrooms should use caution with this supplement. Always speak with your health care provider to see if Coriolus versicolor is appropriate for you.

Laura Vasquez, MSN, APRN, NP-C is now accepting new patients at our Overland Park locations. Call 1-800-447-7276 to schedule!

1. PDQ Integrative, Alternative, and Complementary Therapies Editorial Board. Medicinal Mushrooms (PDQ®): Patient Version. 2021 Jul 28. In: PDQ Cancer Information Summaries [Internet]. Bethesda (MD): National Cancer Institute (US); 2002-. Available from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK424937>



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Kimberly Romig
Editor

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LATEST EPISODES



EPISODE 17 BUSTING BREAST CANCER

Ron Hunnighake, MD
Laura Vasquez, MSN, APRN, NP-C

Dr. Ron sits down with Laura Vasquez to discuss some of the myths around breast cancer and ways to prevent it naturally. They talk about the book *Busting Breast Cancer* by Susan Wadia-Ells and the research that has been done on prevention.



EPISODE 16 MEET LAURA VASQUEZ, MSN, APRN, NP-C

Laura Vasquez, MSN, APRN, NP-C

Leah Chischilly talks with Laura Vasquez who is a nurse practitioner specializing in integrative oncology and complex chronic illness. Laura is the newest member of the Riordan Clinic medical team and is a wealth of knowledge of both traditional and integrative medicine.



EPISODE 15 MAINTAINING A HEALTHY VASCULAR SYSTEM

Ron Hunnighake, MD
Mike Shaw, PA-C

Dr. Ron sits down with Mike Shaw, our resident cardiovascular health and anti-aging specialist. They discuss the importance of vascular health as we age and ways to keep our cardiovascular system young.



EPISODE 14 PREVENTING PAIN AS WE AGE

Dustin Moffitt, ND

Dr. Ron Hunnighake interviews Dr. Dustin Moffitt who specializes in pain management and regenerative medicine. They discuss some of the main causes of pain as we age, supplements that can help with pain, and natural interventions they may be able to prevent surgery.

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