

Breast Cancer Tips

According to the American Cancer Society, there are now about 2.5 million breast cancer survivors living in the United States. As breast cancer survivors go on with their lives, there are many changes they will face in the months and years after completing their treatment. Breast cancer survivors are faced with the possibility of the cancer coming back (recurrence), as well as an increased risk of developing a new breast cancer. Recurrence is possible, even if a woman has undergone a mastectomy, or breast removal. The good news is, although there is no way to completely prevent a breast cancer recurrence, there are many ways for a woman to lower her risk. If you are a breast cancer survivor, the following five tips may help you keep breast cancer from returning.

1) Follow-up Care: Regular doctor appointments, exams and tests are essential in protecting against a breast cancer recurrence and in detecting a recurrence in its earliest stages. A careful examination is recommended every three to six months for the first three years after primary therapy, every 6 to 12 months for the next two years, and then annually. Follow-up exams usually include an examination of the breasts, chest, neck, and underarm areas. Your doctor may conduct or order physical exams, blood tests or imaging studies. Be sure to tell your doctor about any swelling, tightness, or injury to the hand or arm, which could be a sign of lymphedema, a swelling of the arm caused by fluid build up, and a potential side effect of breast cancer. With care, this condition may be avoided or kept under control.

2) Mammography Screening and Self-examination: Mammography screening, which is a simple x-ray scan of the breasts, remains the best available method to detect breast cancer early. Although no medical tests are always 100 percent accurate, mammograms, as well as monthly breast self-examinations, are important steps to guard against recurrence. You can find more information about monthly breast self-exams by logging on to The American Cancer Society from your computer. You obtain free downloadable breast self-exam cards by visiting the Susan G. Komen for the Cure Web site.

3) Continuing Treatment: Hormonal breast cancer treatment often includes tamoxifen or aromatase inhibitors. Survivors who are being treated with these drugs should continue to take them regularly for the prescribed time. In clinical studies, tamoxifen and aromatase inhibitors have been shown to lower the risk of a breast cancer recurrence and lower the risk of new breast cancers for certain women. Tamoxifen can increase the risk of a certain type of uterine cancer, so those being treated with tamoxifen should have a pelvic exam every year and tell their doctor right away if there is abnormal vaginal bleeding. For those women taking an aromatase inhibitor, your doctor should also keep a close eye on your bone density as these medications may weaken bone structure.

4) Healthy Eating: Women recovering from breast cancer are encouraged to follow established guidelines for good health. Working with a doctor is the best way for survivors to develop a safe nutrition and exercise plan that matches their needs. Breast cancer research has

shown that obesity and weight gain can increase the risk of recurrence. They also raise the risk of other important disorders, such as heart disease and diabetes. An overall healthy diet - one that is low in fat and high in fruits, vegetables and whole grains - may protect against cancer.

5) Exercise: Regular exercise provides real benefits to breast cancer survivors. A recent study in the Journal of Pain and Symptom Management, March 2007, showed that women with breast cancer that has spread beyond the breast may benefit from participating in a tailored yoga program that includes gentle yoga postures, breathing exercises, and meditation.

http://www.nbcam.org/patient_survivors.cfm

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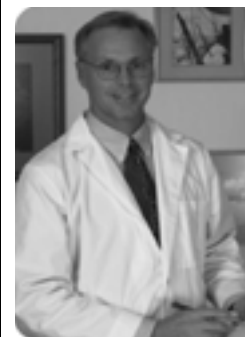
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