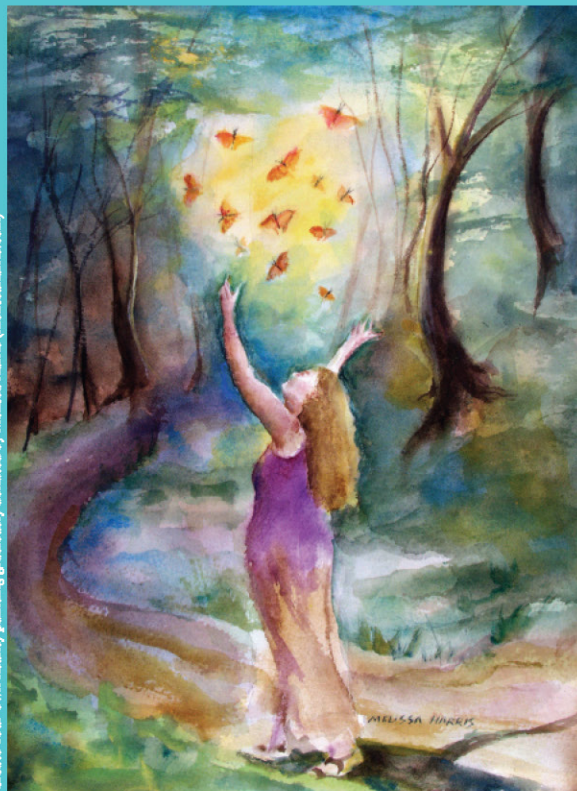


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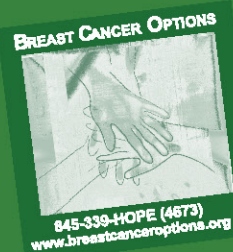
Create Your Own Reality painting graciously donated by Melissa Harris (melissaharris.com)

Changes and choices YOU can make — little by little, bit by bit, day by day, to create a healthier environment, bolster your immune system and reduce the risk of breast cancer.

# Healthy Lifestyles

## 2019 Calendar

by Breast Cancer Options  
*A not-for-profit organization dedicated to supplying information, support and advocacy.*



# The Precautionary Principle...better Safe than Sorry

The Precautionary Principle is defined as follows: When human activities may lead to morally unacceptable harm that is scientifically plausible but uncertain, actions shall be taken to avoid or diminish that harm. Morally unacceptable harm refers to harm to humans or the environment that is

- Threatening to human life or health, or
- Serious and effectively irreversible, or
- Inequitable to present or future generations, or
- Imposed without adequate consideration of the human rights of those affected.

The Precautionary Principle is a strategy to cope with possible risks where scientific understanding is yet incomplete, such as the risks of nano technology, genetically modified organisms and systemic insecticides. Today the precautionary principle is increasingly organized around the notion that it is better to be safe than sorry. While it is difficult to know the exact role toxins play in determining our health, their impact on our health becomes clearer every day. The precautionary principle is a tool to help us make better health and environmental decisions. It aims to prevent harm from the outset rather than manage it after the fact. Advocates of the Precautionary Principle want to have standards that protect people and the environment from potential harm.

We have learned that adopting just a lifestyle approach to preventing breast cancer and other cancers does not work because the majority of breast cancers cannot be explained by just lifestyle factors. Only about 5-10% of breast cancers are due to hereditary factors. A total of 25-40% are due to **any known risk factors**. Reasons for the other causes are unclear but are likely due to preventable factors that should be studied. The precautionary principle holds that safety tests should be held in laboratories, not in our bodies.

**Facts to remember:** There are 85,000 chemicals in use today and only 7% of them have been tested for safety. Combinations of these chemicals have not been tested at all. Precaution is overdue. Un-studied or understudied chemicals are used in everything from preservatives in our personal care products to flame retardants in our household furnishings—from plasticizers in our water bottles to pesticides on our fruit and vegetables— from household cleaning products to children's toys, as well as electro-magnetic radiation from cell phones, computers and other devices. In addition to carcinogenic and other toxic effects, xenoestrogens, act like estrogens and may promote breast cancer.

"The Fight Against Breast Cancer", has focused mostly on treatment and cure and while both are important, they are generally detached from prevention or risk reduction and both are "after the fact". Women have become hyper-aware of breast cancer, however there is no other disease that we try to eradicate by going shopping.

**Does 'Pinktober' Trivialize Breast Cancer?** The efforts to raise awareness talk about early detection with no mention of environmental risk factors and products that are hormone disruptors or carcinogenic. We need to focus on prevention-based behavior and healthy lifestyle choice factors like diet, smoking and weight control as well as considering genetic factors and toxic environmental exposures. Everyone is aware, now we need to work on supporting the people who have metastatic disease as well as working to prevent new cases.

**WHAT YOU CAN DO:** Become an informed consumer. Look around your environment. Read product labels and don't purchase a product that can harm you or your family;

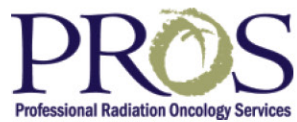
- Select alternatives least harmful to the environment and human health; be particularly vigilant with products for children including toys, food and clothing
- Help lower your risk of harm by making responsible health choices: eat a healthy diet, learn how to deal with stress; integrate exercise into your life, identify and lower your exposure as much as possible to environmental risk factors and advocate for what you believe.

### What Can We Do??

1. Phase out chemicals known to cause cancer and genetic harm
2. Educate the public about the health effects of radiation
3. Measure the chemical body burden and health outcomes
4. Hold Corporations accountable for hazardous Practices
5. Enforce existing environmental protections laws
6. Practice "healthy purchasing"
7. Adapted the "Precautionary Principle"

Adapted from - State of the Evidence (3<sup>rd</sup> ed) - Breast Cancer Fund

**We need to do everything we can NOW to eliminate the chance that our daughters and their daughters will ever get breast cancer.**



**THE RIGHT TEAM AND THE RIGHT TECHNOLOGY TO FIGHT CANCER**

Lawrence D. Koutcher, M.D.  
Radiation Oncologist

Leah M. Katz, M.D., M.P.H.  
Radiation Oncologist



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# January

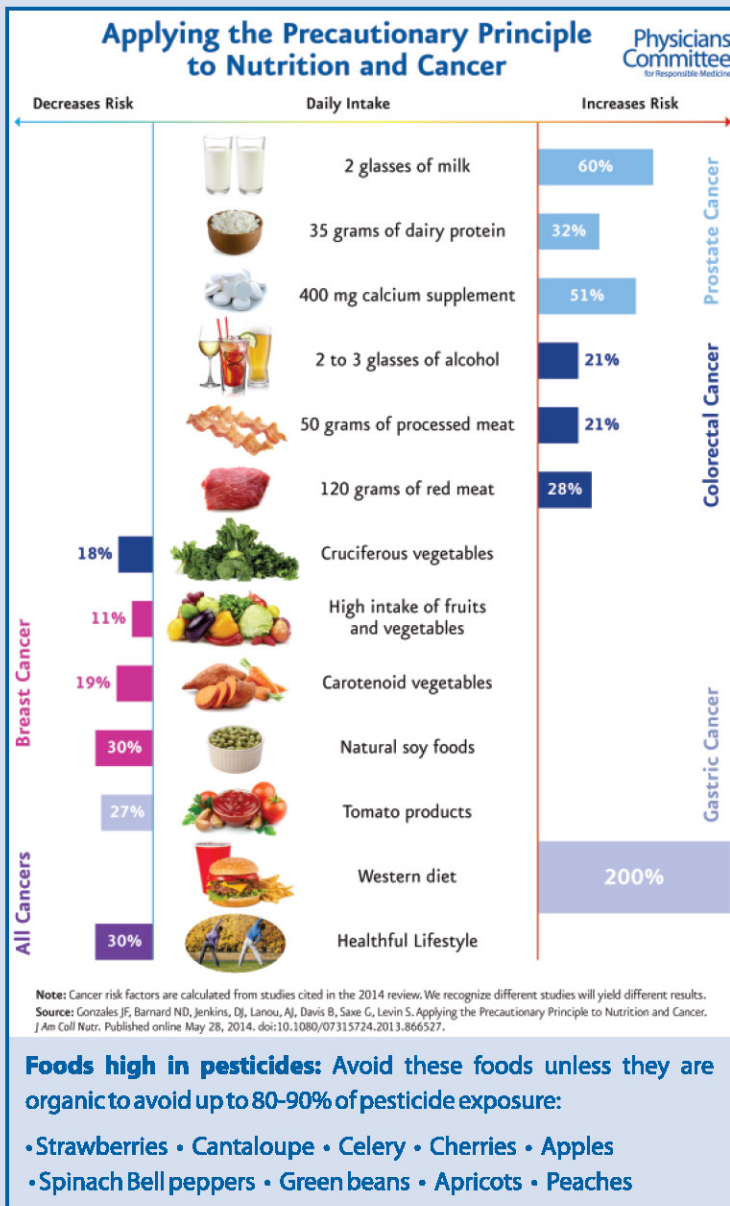
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# Diet and the Precautionary Principle

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**There's no one food that can cure cancer, but that doesn't stop the myths from circulating. However, research shows that plant-based foods reduce the risk of cancer and strengthen the chance of survival after diagnosis.** The evidence is sufficiently compelling: (1) limit or avoid dairy products to reduce the risk of prostate cancer; (2) limit or avoid alcohol to reduce the risk of cancers of the mouth, larynx, esophagus, colon, breast; (3) avoid red and processed meat to reduce the risk of cancers of the colon and rectum; (4) avoid grilled, fried, and broiled meats to reduce the risk of cancers of the colon, breast, prostate, kidney, and pancreas (5) consume soy products (non-processed) during adolescence to reduce breast cancer risk in adulthood and reduce recurrence risk and mortality for women previously treated for breast cancer; and (6) emphasize consumption of vegetables and fruits to reduce risk of several common forms of cancer.

**Why you should eat organic:** Many pesticides and herbicides sprayed on fruits, vegetables and grains are "estrogen mimics" and can stimulate the growth of breast tumors and cause hormonal imbalances in both women and men. Organic food is grown without chemicals, hormones or antibiotics and has also been found to be much higher in important nutrients than foods grown in commercially fertilized, nutrient-depleted soil. Organic eggs, dairy products and meats are higher in nutrients, and free of the estrogen-like hormones and antibiotics that are fed to the animals and stored in their fat. Avoid genetically modified foods as the long term risks are unknown.

**Fruits, Vegetables and Whole Grains:** They contain phytochemicals with antioxidant, antiestrogen and chemopreventive properties that may prevent cancer. Recommended: 5 or more servings of vegetables and fruits daily. Cruciferous vegetables (broccoli, cauliflower, kale, cabbage, brussel sprouts). Fruits (grapes, strawberries, red raspberries, black raspberries). Unprocessed whole grains are high in complex carbohydrates, fiber, vitamins, minerals and phytochemicals. High fiber intake may have a positive benefit by altering hormonal actions of breast cancer and other hormonal-dependent cancers. Daily fiber intake should be 25-30 grams of insoluble and soluble fiber.

**Consume Healthy Fats:** Fats are the building blocks of cell membranes and hormones. They control the balance of inflammatory and anti-inflammatory compounds in the body. Omega 3 fats help to decrease inflammation, which decreases your risk of cancer, heart disease, diabetes, arthritis and neurological diseases. Deep sea fish, fish oils, free range/organic poultry, grass fed meats, wild game and flax seeds are high in Omega 3 fatty acids. Avoid all hydrogenated oils and trans-fatty acids. Use unrefined, organic, healthy oils like olive, flax, coconut and nut oils, and moderate amounts of organic butter.

**How to Remove Chemicals from Your Food:** Mix one teaspoon of baking soda to 2 cups of water for 5-15 minutes (the longer you soak, the more organic & non-organic chemicals you get rid of) Rinse before eating.

- Foods That Can Cause Hormonal Imbalance**
- Fatty foods • Artificial sweeteners • Alcohol consumption • Processed foods • Dairy products • Exposure to environmental toxins on food
  - Refined sugars and carbohydrates • Xenobiotics, antibiotics, and hormones in commercially raised livestock (meat & dairy)

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# February

**Reading Fruit or Vegetable Food Labels**

Here are the basics:

- Conventionally grown with the use of pesticides.** There are only four numbers in the PLU. The last four letters of the PLU code tell what kind of vegetable or fruit. ie..bananas are labeled with the code 4011
- Genetically Modified fruit or vegetables.** There are five numbers in the PLU code, and the number starts with "8". Genetically modified fruits and vegetables trump being organic. So, it is possible to eat organic produce that are grown from genetically modified seeds. A GMO banana would be: 84011
- Organically Grown:** There are five numbers in the PLU code, and the number starts with "9". Grown organically and is not genetically modified. An organic banana would be: 94011

Beginning in October foods will be labeled as belonging to one of four categories:

**100% Organic:** Made with 100% organic ingredients

**Organic:** Made with at least 95% organic ingredients

**Made With Organic Ingredients:** Made with a minimum of 70% organic ingredients. Strict restrictions on the remaining 30% including no GMOs (genetically modified organisms)

**Products with less than 70% organic ingredients** may list organically produced ingredients on the side panel of the package. May not make any organic claims on the front of the package.

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17	18 President's Day	19	20	21	22	23
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# Making Informed Medical Decisions: the Value of Second Opinions

A breast cancer diagnosis can be confusing and frightening. Should I choose surgery or something less invasive? Is this procedure right for me? Should I watch and wait for now? What are the chances that this treatment will work for me? How will it make me feel? How will it change my life?

The treatment that is best for one person may not be what is best for another. Make your decisions based on evidence-based information. Make sure you understand your options and that all of your questions get asked and are answered. Informed people feel better about the decision process.

**Making decisions can be difficult because:**

- There is always more than one choice.
- Each choice has good points and bad points.
- There is no "correct" choice.
- What you choose depends on what is important to you.

**Breast cancer feels urgent, but most people diagnosed with breast cancer can safely take time to investigate:** Give yourself time to explore how best to proceed. It's natural to want to deal with it immediately, but breast cancer is usually not an emergency. Most tumors have been growing for years when they are discovered. A few days or weeks generally is not significant to the tumor growth, but can make all the difference in finding the treatments that are best for you.

**The value of second opinions:** Getting a second opinion can be very valuable for people diagnosed with breast cancer. *A recent study showed that 43% of patients who asked for a second opinion at an NCI designated Cancer Center had a change in diagnosis. New additional cancers were identified in 22.8% There was a change in pathology interpretation in 20%.* These findings show that second opinions are beneficial and can have a diagnostic impact. Referral for a second opinion may impact the diagnosis. New developments in cancer treatment are happening so fast that it's practically impossible for every doctor to be aware of all the most up-to-date ways to deal with the disease. The best doctor to see is one who is a specialist and has lots of experience in treating your type of cancer. [www.cancer.gov/research/nci-role/cancer-centers](http://www.cancer.gov/research/nci-role/cancer-centers)

When you go for a second opinion, take all your records and all related test results, tissue slides, x-rays and/or other imaging with you so that they will not need to be redone. The doctor will review your medical records and reevaluate your diagnosis. If the second opinion mirrors the first opinion you can move forward with treatment, confident that you are doing the right thing.

If the second opinion does not concur with the first, you can opt for a third opinion, or return to your original doctor and request that he or she engage in a constructive dialogue with the doctor who rendered the conflicting opinion. It's possible that after they share the reasons for their opposing opinions, they will find common ground and agree on the best course of action for you. The important thing is that you must be able to trust and believe in the persons charged with your care, so that you can focus your energies on getting better and moving ahead with your life.

**You can get second opinions from a:**

- Pathologist • Breast surgeon • Medical Oncologist • Radiation Oncologist

*Second opinions can help by confirming a diagnosis and providing reassurance that the patient is making a reasonable choice.*

**Gather information and ask questions:** Ask your doctor which choices you need to make and when. You don't need to decide everything at once but one choice may affect all your other choices. Write down your questions and bring someone with you to medical appointments for support and to take notes. Your doctor and your healthcare team should be supportive and receptive to open discussion of your options. Get copies of all your records so you have all the information you need to research your case. Find out what tests were used to arrive at the diagnosis and what other tests are planned. When your doctor tells you your treatment options, ask if these are your only choices.

**Explore the different treatment options:** If all the doctors you've consulted with agree on a particular course of treatment, and you feel comfortable with it, your decision should be fairly easy. Sometimes you may be presented with more than one appropriate treatment plan. For example, there may be a nearly equal chance of recovery with a mastectomy or with a lumpectomy plus radiation or chemotherapy. In a case like this, your doctor should discuss with you the pros and cons of each alternative and give you an informed opinion, but only you can make the final decision about which treatment feels right to you.

**Get the support you need and ask for help:** This can range from support groups or private counseling, to assistance with keeping your life functioning smoothly. While family members and friends can be a tremendous help, sometimes people who are not emotionally involved can offer more objective support. Give yourself a break, and give someone else, a friend, relative, co-worker or neighbor an opportunity to give of themselves. You would do it for them! If you need evidence-based information call an advocacy organization like Breast Cancer Options.



**Hannah L Brooks, MD, PLLC**  
845-645-9824

[www.hudsonvalleycancerogenetics.com](http://www.hudsonvalleycancerogenetics.com)

Are you a survivor diagnosed before broad panel genetic testing was available? Does cancer run in your family? Are you or others at risk for disease?

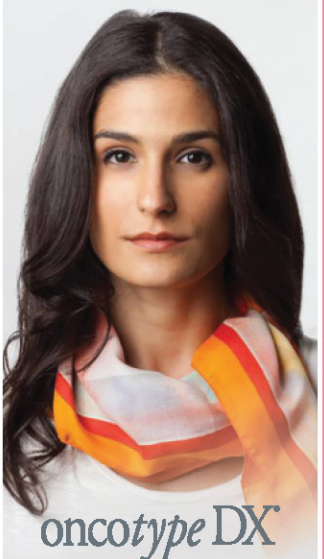
Consultation and Genetic Testing may impact important screening and treatment decisions. Physician specialist with academic and clinical experience, further Certified in Clinical Cancer Genetics.

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# March

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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St. Patrick's Day 17	18	19	20	21	22	23
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# Life After Breast Cancer: Finding a New Normal

## Cancer Care Close to Home

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- Fern Feldman Anolick Breast Health Center
- Infusion Therapy
- Medical Oncology
- Radiation Oncology
- Surgical Oncology

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### Reuner Cancer Support House Services

- Breast Education and Outreach Program
- Linda Young Ovarian Cancer Support Program
- Support Groups and Counseling

To learn more, call **845.339.2071**



From the moment of diagnosis, through all the ups and downs of treatment most patients operate in crisis mode. That becomes their standard way of functioning and switching to a day-to-day life without crisis can actually feel wrong. There's always a nagging feeling they should still be doing something to continue the fight, but they're left without a plan.

Diagnosis brings a heightened sense of vulnerability and a diminished sense of control. Women live with uncertainty and fear even after treatment. Their questions – "Am I cured? Will I have a recurrence? Will I survive a recurrence?" – are unanswerable.

Treatments can be physically grueling and emotionally draining. Many expect to recover rapidly, but find they feel exhausted for a long time. It takes almost as long as the total duration of treatment to really feel well again. And the effects of the therapy don't necessarily stop when therapy stops. Physical changes – the result of surgery or of treatment side effects – can persist.

Survivorship studies have found concerns over body image, depression, anxiety and sexuality that need to be addressed. Some seek support from loved ones or other cancer survivors or turn to their faith to help them cope and some seek help from counselors. Whatever you decide, it's important to do what's right for you and try not to compare yourself with others.

#### A new normal may include:

- Making changes in your lifestyle and the way you eat
- Permanent scars on your body
- Emotional scars from going through so much
- Finding new or different sources of support
- Different routines than you had before
- Not being able to do things you used to do easily

#### Some facts:

- The primary cause of death in women who have had breast cancer is not cancer; it's cardiovascular disease, the leading cause of death for women over 50.
- More than 80% of people diagnosed with breast cancer recover and go on to live for at least 10 years
- Approximately 80% of women who are diagnosed with breast cancer are detected in the early stages of the disease.
- When breast cancers are discovered at an early, "localized" stage and treated there is a 97% five-year survival.

#### Tips that may help:

- Focus on each day and expect both good and bad days.
- Avoid pressure to make decisions or start new activities right away. Plan rest time between activities.
- Be prepared for mixed reactions from family and friends. If people don't know how to react, try not to get upset. Some people avoid contact because cancer brings up difficult emotions. They are dealing with it in their own way.
- Share your feelings and worries with family and friends.
- Talk to your doctor if you are concerned about sadness or low moods.
- Practice some form of relaxation, such as meditation, mindfulness based stress reduction, visualization, yoga or deep breathing.
- Keep a journal. Many people find it helps to write down how they're feeling.
- Join a support group. Speaking with other cancer survivors may help you cope and make you feel more optimistic about the future.

#### Taking care of yourself:

- **Exercise.** Exercise is a known way to reduce stress and feel less tense - whether you've had cancer or not. It helps the body to detoxify and increases the ratio of "good" to "bad" estrogen metabolites. Be careful not to overdo it.
- **Mind-body methods.** Meditation, mindfulness based stress reduction or relaxation may help you lower stress by quieting your mind. Try focusing on your breathing or repeating words or phrases to yourself. Other methods include hypnosis, yoga, or imagery.
- **Creative outlets.** Art, writing, music, or dance gives people the chance to express themselves in different ways.
- **Finding humor and laughing.** Laughter can help you relax. When you laugh, your brain releases chemicals that produce pleasure and relax your muscles. Even a smile can fight off stressful thoughts.

A breast cancer diagnosis will change your life in ways that last well after treatment ends. As time goes by, many survivors think about their cancer less often. However, even years after treatment, some events may cause you to become worried. Follow-up visits, symptoms similar to the ones you had before, or the anniversary of the date you were diagnosed can trigger concern. **Be patient. The healing process is a journey – not a footrace.**

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# April

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# Medical Marijuana and Cannabidiol

The term medical marijuana refers to using the whole, unprocessed marijuana plant or its basic extracts to treat symptoms of illness and other conditions. Marijuana plants have multiple chemicals, known as cannabinoids. The two main ones are THC and CBD. Both compounds have important health benefits: Several studies underscore the therapeutic advantages for combining CBD and THC—particularly for treating peripheral neuropathy. THC has antispasmodic, analgesic, anti-tremor, anti-inflammatory, appetite stimulating and anti-emetic properties, and CBD has anti-inflammatory, anticonvulsant, antipsychotic, antioxidant, neuroprotective and immunomodulatory effects. They are the only two cannabinoids that have been well studied to date. Our bodies contain a biological system called the endocannabinoid system that interacts with both THC and CBD. It is an important modulatory system and has been recognized as an important modulatory system in the function of brain, endocrine, and immune tissues.

**CBD** is found primarily in extractions from the hemp plant. It's sold in gels, gummies, oils, supplements, extracts, and more.

**THC** is the main psychoactive compound in marijuana. It's available in oils, edibles, tinctures, capsules, and more.

**CBD and THC** have many of the same medical benefits. They can provide relief from several of the same conditions. However, CBD doesn't cause the euphoric effects that occur with THC.

**Medical Marijuana (THC) Overview:** Marijuana includes cannabidiol (CBD) and tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), two natural compounds found in plants of the Cannabis genus. Cannabis is effective in treating chronic neuropathic pain. It is also useful in treating side effects of diseases that cause a loss of appetite, such as AIDS. When THC enters the body it attaches to and stimulates cannabinoid receptors in the brain. The stimulation of these receptors affects the body in various ways. Also among its effects are reduced pain and increased appetite.

**Supported by data & controlled studies:** Small controlled trials showed that oral THC stimulates appetite, slows down weight loss for patients with advanced malignancies, reduces inflammation and may inhibit tumor growth.

- Anorexia, early satiety, weight-loss and cachexia are some of the most challenging symptoms facing cancer affiliated patients
- National Comprehensive Cancer Network anti-emesis guidelines recommend cannabinoids among other therapies to consider as breakthrough treatment for chemotherapy induced nausea and vomiting
- Pain intensity and relief: Double blind study reported that 15-20mg doses of THC produce significant pain relief and appetite stimulation
- THC connects to the CB1 or CB2 cannabinoid receptor site on the cancer cell. Small studies show that CBD & THC may inhibit tumor growth and block cell growth and the development of blood vessels that tumors need to grow.

**Cannabidiol (CBD) Overview:** CBD is one of over 60 compounds found in cannabis that are called cannabinoids. There are actually two versions of CBD on the market. One is created from hemp, while the other comes from marijuana.

**The difference between marijuana CBD and hemp CBD. CBD oil and hemp oil are both low in THC but Hemp oil has only traces of CBD (around 3.5%) while CBD oil from Cannabis can have up to 20%.** It is the higher concentration that makes CBD beneficial in the treatment of various health disorders. Think of Hemp oil-based CBD as a vitamin (high in potassium & magnesium) and the bud-based products to be pharmaceutical grade. Hemp oil-based CBD is legal and can be purchased in health food stores. CBD found in Cannabis requires a medical marijuana license.

The **endocannabinoid system** (ECS) regulates relaxation, appetite, sleep cycles, certain inflammation responses and even cognitive functions. The two types of cannabinoid receptors found throughout the body are a CB1 and CB2. Studies suggest that cannabinoids are useful in pain modulation, reducing anxiety and possesses anti-proliferative, pro-apoptotic effects inhibiting cancer cell migration, adhesion and invasion. CBD doesn't have psycho-active effects. A CBD-rich product with little THC is effective for helping with anxiety, depression, seizures, psychosis and PTSD.

### Most Common Ailments Treated with Medical Marijuana

- Appetite loss • Cancer • Crohn's disease • Pain • Multiple sclerosis • Muscle spasms • Nausea
- Wasting syndrome (cachexia) • Eating disorders such as anorexia • Glaucoma • Nausea

**Interactions:** CBD, THC & Chemotherapy. Limited preclinical research indicates that administering CBD and/or THC in conjunction with first-line chemotherapy drugs could potentiate the latter, thereby reducing the dosage of highly toxic chemo necessary to treat the cancer.

**List of Consenting Medical Marijuana Program Practitioners:** [www.health.ny.gov/regulations/medical\\_marijuana/practitioner/public\\_list.htm](http://www.health.ny.gov/regulations/medical_marijuana/practitioner/public_list.htm)

**How to register:** Once certified, patients must login to <https://my.ny.gov>. Certified patients who are registered can purchase medical marijuana products from a registered organization's dispensing facility in New York State.

[www.health.ny.gov/regulations/medical\\_marijuana/application/selected\\_applicants.htm](http://www.health.ny.gov/regulations/medical_marijuana/application/selected_applicants.htm)

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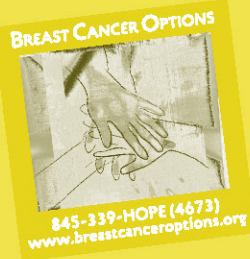


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THAN 3.5 MILLION  
BREAST CANCER  
SURVIVORS IN THE  
U.S. TODAY

May

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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12 Mother's Day	13	14	15	16	17	18
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# The Impact of Light at Night and Electromagnetic Radiation

**The Impact of Light at Night on Hormones** – Light at night has become a major environmental pollutant disrupting the natural sleep/wake pattern and having great impact on hormone balance. The natural (Circadian) rhythm consists of daytime exposure to intense sunlight alternating with night-times of near total darkness. Evidence shows a link between low levels of the tumor-fighting hormone melatonin and cancer development, especially breast, ovarian and prostate cancer. Exposing the eyes to light at night when melatonin is normally flowing stops its production.

**Night Shift Work is a Possible Carcinogen:** Nurses and flight attendants who work night shifts and even women who stay up late 3 or more times a week have a 30-60% increased risk of breast cancer. Conversely women who become blind before age 65 have a much lower risk. Studies have also linked the increase in obesity and diabetes over the past several decades to increased exposure to blue-rich light at night which disrupts the release of melatonin.

[www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2015/01/150105081757.htm](http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2015/01/150105081757.htm)

The new, energy efficient compact fluorescent and LED bulbs are more melatonin suppressive than incandescent bulbs. They disrupt our circadian rhythms – our body's regulator mechanism – and studies have shown negative health effects from minor annoyances such as headaches, fatigue, eyestrain and weight gain, to serious effects such as insomnia and sleep disturbances, an increased risk of cancer and a suppressed immune system.

**It is Important to Remain in Darkness for the Entire Night:** Watching TV, sitting in front of computer screens, reading with artificial light into the wee hours, or sleeping with a light on can contribute to melatonin deficiency.

**Melatonin is a Potent Hormone** – it is produced by the pineal gland in darkness. Melatonin fights cancer in several ways:

1. it interferes with the way that estrogen promotes cancer growth;
2. it's a powerful antioxidant that destroys damaged potentially pre-cancerous cells;
3. it interferes with the metabolism of linoleic acid ...cancer's favorite food... by cancer cells. It acts as an anti-estrogen, inhibits the release of estrogen and slows down the growth of breast tumors. These anti-estrogenic mechanisms suggest that melatonin may have a role in the prevention and treatment of hormone-dependent cancer.

**Melatonin Plus Tamoxifen** appears to induce a response rate in metastatic breast cancer patients who do not respond to tamoxifen alone. However, more research is needed. High-dose melatonin (20-40 mg per day), in combination with conventional treatments, may boost response, possibly doubling 1year survival rates in patients with metastatic breast cancer. The combination of green tea and tamoxifen is more potent together in suppressing breast cancer growth.

[www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16785249](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16785249)

**Electromagnetic Radiation (EMR) and Hormones** – Electromagnetic radiation is an overlooked hormone disruptor. There is increasing evidence that various electromagnetic fields reduce melatonin levels and stimulate levels of IGF-1 and other hormones. Overnight exposure of women to elevated levels of EMR disrupts melatonin production increasing estrogen levels. Melatonin exerts anti-cancer and anti-inflammatory effects.

Women and men who work in electrical jobs, including electricians, power line workers, telephone installers and electrical engineers or those who have a high occupational exposure to magnetic fields have a greater risk of dying from breast cancer.

This increased risk has been linked to the suppression of melatonin from Electro-Magnetic Radiation. Overnight exposure of women to elevated levels of EMR increased estrogen levels, a known risk factor for breast cancer. In men, EMR exposure reduced levels of testosterone – a hormone drop that has been linked to testicular and prostate cancers.

**The Effect of EMR Doses is Stronger at Lower Levels** – Sleeping in a room with cordless or cell phones, digital clocks, CD/radio players, TV's and computers can disrupt our hormone balance suppressing nightly melatonin production. **Generally, 3-5 feet away from most household magnetic fields is a safe distance from their effects. In addition, while many reports cite the safety of cell phones, there are sufficient studies linking cell phone usage to cancer to promote a precautionary approach. Continual cell phone use generates over-exposure to EMR.**

**Some suggestions:**

- Make sure your room is quiet and dark.
- Sleep at least 3-5 feet away from outlets and unplug devices.
- If possible, complete work during the day; sleep at night.
- Avoid looking at bright screens 2-3 three hours before bed.
- Get up and go to bed at the same time every day.
- Avoid light at night as much as you can. If you need a night light to go to the bathroom use a red bulb which won't suppress melatonin.
- Never carry cell phones next to the body.
- Exercise regularly early in the day. This may promote better quality sleep while vigorous exercise just before bedtime may delay sleep.
- Boost melatonin levels naturally by sleeping in complete darkness at night and getting exposure to bright light during the daytime, ideally outdoors.

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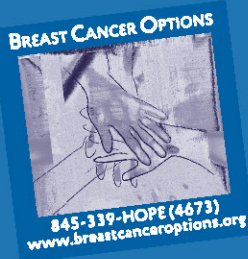
Melissa Harris, MFA, is an internationally known artist, author, and psychic. Her images grace the covers of books, CDs, magazines, and calendars worldwide.

Melissa also teaches "Painting Outside the Lines"™ art-making workshops in Hurley, NY. She is known for her Spirit Essence Portraits.

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# June

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# Treating Side Effects of Cancer Therapies with Integrative Medicine

The side effects that you experience will depend on the type, location, and extent of your breast cancer and the treatment you receive. Side effects are very individual and may not be the same for two people with similar diagnoses that are receiving the same treatment. They may even vary for the same individual from one treatment session to the next. Some of these side effects may show up immediately and go away when treatment stops and some may continue after you are finished with treatment. Some may show up long after treatment has stopped.

**Prolonged Nightly Fasting Cuts Risk for Breast Cancer Return:** Not eating in the evening and at night could reduce the risk for recurrence of breast cancer, according to a new study published online March 31 in JAMA Oncology. University of California, San Diego investigators found that breast cancer survivors, who reported consistently not eating for 13 hours or more (overnight), had a 36% lower risk of having a breast cancer recurrence and 21% lower risk of dying from their breast cancer.

**Mouth Sores** – Chemotherapy drugs can cause the lining of the mouth and digestive tract to slough off and become raw and tender. L-Glutamine is an amino acid that helps repair the lining. With mouth sores a gargle is recommended as well as oral capsules or powder mixed into water or juice. Slippery Elm: A mucilaginous herb indicated for soothing irritated and inflamed mucous membranes. It has a thick, ropy texture that is great for coating and healing raw sores in the mouth and entire digestive tract. Slippery elm powder can be purchased at most health food stores. A slippery elm gruel is made by adding 1 Tbsp of slippery elm powder to warm water to form a thin paste. Honey can be added to taste. Take 2ce daily. If desired, the gruel can be mixed with yogurt or applesauce to increase palatability. Powdered L-glutamine can also be added for greater healing effect.

**Skin Irritation** – Severe skin irritation is common due to localized radiation treatment or Hand Foot Syndrome (also called Palmar-Plantar Erythrodysesthesia or PPE) caused by chemotherapy or biologic drug treatments. Several natural therapies can help relieve pain of damaged skin tissue and speed healing.

- **Calendula:** Extracted from the flower of the marigold plant, calendula contains large amounts of bioflavonoids (antioxidants) that can protect the body against free-radical damage from radiation. It has potent skin healing properties as well as anti-inflammatory, antiviral, and antibacterial effects. It can be applied as an ointment or oil. Select a product with calendula as the main ingredient with 2-5g of calendula per 100g of ointment.

- **Emu Oil:** (*Lisa Alschuler, ND: The Definitive Guide to Cancer*) recommends the application of emu oil to soothe inflamed and cracked skin. A variety of anecdotal evidence support the topical antiinflammatory properties of emu oil. It has been shown to reduce pain and swelling and is bacteriostatic as well.

**Managing Fatigue from Chemotherapy and Radiation:**

Studies show that the best remedy for fatigue is exercise. It is important to make sure there are no underlying medical issues such as anemia, iron deficiency or low thyroid function. Most often it is just “cancer-related fatigue” from the treatment. The difference between cancer-related fatigue and just being tired is that you DO NOT feel better after getting more rest. Exercise at least 3 hours a week, and if you can, 5-6 hours a week. Any type of exercise helps. Cancer-associated fatigue can be reduced by lipid replacement (fat-soluble vitamins like vitamins A, D, E), antioxidants and cofactors like COQ(10).

**Chemotherapy-Induced Peripheral Neuropathy (CIPN)** affects the lives of up to 40% of cancer patients who receive chemotherapy. **Nerves have a covering (myelin) that protects them from damage and ensures that they work properly. The use of vitamin e to treat peripheral neuropathy caused by chemotherapy:** This was tested and found effective in a study in "Neurology." Patients on cisplatin therapy were given oral vitamin E, in the alpha-tocopherol form, before starting chemotherapy and for three months after. The incidence and severity of neuropathy was found to be significantly lower in the vitamin E group than in the control group that received a placebo.

**Chemobrain** – This can affect up to 35% of breast cancer patients. Post-treatment, the common mental “fogginess” can prevent them from staying organized and completing everyday activities, such as sticking to a schedule, or remembering where they left the car keys. Breast cancer survivors with cognitive complaints participated in a 5-week group training program to help with memory and concentration and were compared to survivors who received delayed treatment. Women in the early intervention group reported improved memory compared with those in the delayed intervention group. They showed continued improvement and brain wave patterns normalized. (ASCO)

**Nausea / Vomiting:** Ginger: Fresh ginger root tea is most effective but candied ginger or natural ginger ale can be helpful as well. Fresh Ginger Root Tea: Add ¼ cup of grated or coarsely chopped fresh ginger root to 4 cups of water. Bring mixture to a gentle boil for 3 minutes. Turn off heat source and steep for at least 5 minutes. Strain and serve. Add honey to taste. Yarrow tea: Add 1 Tbsp dried yarrow flowers in 8 oz. of hot water. Allow to steep for 20 minutes. Sip 1 tsp as needed every 20 minutes.

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We work with cancer patients to help create an environment in their body where cancer is less likely to grow. For those who are in treatment we work with the oncologist team and focus on nutrition and lifestyle modification to strengthen the immune system, enhance detoxification and support the patient through their treatment. Post treatment, we work to decrease the risk of recurrence.

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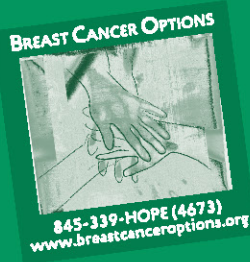
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	1	2	3	4 Independence Day	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
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# Lifestyle Factors, Cancer and Gene Expression

Only 10%-15% of cancers occur in people at high risk of developing cancer because of inherited genetic defects, such as mutations in BRCA genes. Most of us are born without these genetic defects, but during the course of our lifetimes, a number of genes may become damaged, mutate and lead to cancer. Proper lifestyle choices can reduce a person's risk of getting cancer or a cancer recurrence by generating healthy growth promoting signals affecting precancerous as well as cancer cells. It has been estimated that 70% of all cancers could be prevented if everyone would exercise regularly, maintain a proper weight, eat a diet rich in fruits and vegetables, sleep in darkness and learn how to handle stress.

**Diet and Physical Activity:** Studies show that women who eat a minimum of 5 servings of vegetables and fruit per day combined with regular physical activity - roughly 30 minutes of brisk walking daily, reduce their risk of recurrence even if they have BRCA mutations. Natural plant foods contain a variety of phytochemicals, micronutrients with a variety of anti-cancer effects: anti-estrogenic, anti-proliferative, pro-apoptotic, anti-angiogenic, antioxidant and anti-inflammatory effects. Many non-organic foods contain chemicals that can mutate genes and therefore should be avoided when possible.

**Control Your Weight:** One of the most important lifestyle practices to improve breast cancer survival chances is maintaining a healthful body weight. Being overweight or obese increases the risk of several cancers, including breast cancers (in women past menopause),

**What are the Risks Related to Weight?** Breast cancer risk begins to increase when adult weight gain (from age 18) is more than 20 pounds. Studies show that women who gained 21-30 pounds after age 18 were 40% more likely to develop breast cancer than women who had not gained more than 5 pounds, and women who gained 70 pounds doubled their risk.

Obesity leads to high levels of insulin-like growth factor (IGF-1) in the circulation. This may protect early-stage cancer cells scattered throughout the body from dying, since IGF-1 inhibits the action of cell suicide genes. It also leads to inflammation which may explain the link between obesity and cancer. Inflammation is a normal body process designed to heal the body following injury. When it becomes chronic the injured tissue is bathed in growth-promoting cytokines that tell stem cells in the tissue to multiply to replace the cells that have been injured.

**How Much Physical Activity is Needed to Lower Breast Cancer Risk?**

Physical activity affects breast cancer in 2 distinct ways: directly, by influencing circulating hormones, and indirectly, by helping to control weight. It is recommended that women be moderately to vigorously active for 45-60 minutes on 5 or more days per week to lower risk. Moderate activities are those that make you breathe as hard as you would during a brisk walk. This includes walking, biking, housework and gardening. Vigorous activities generally engage large muscle groups and cause an increase in heart rate, breathing depth and frequency, and sweating.

**What About Alcohol Consumption?** Alcohol can change the way a woman's body metabolizes estrogen. This can cause blood estrogen levels to rise. Estrogen levels are higher in women who drink alcohol than in non-drinkers. These higher estrogen levels may in turn, increase the risk of breast cancer. Beyond the estrogen connection, alcohol itself is believed to be carcinogenic. Studies suggest risk of recurrence increases for ER positive breast cancer survivors when they have more than 1-2 drinks per week. All women, but especially those who drink, should consume folate-rich foods: leafy greens, legumes, and enriched whole-grain products are good sources.

**Exposure to Estrogen and Estrogen Mimics:** Prolonged, uninterrupted exposure to estrogen and estrogen mimics (xenoestrogens) can increase breast cancer risk. Xenoestrogens bind to estrogen receptors and can alter estrogen levels. Learn to be an informed consumer and avoid harmful products.

**DETOXIFICATION:** Toxins are a common environmental trigger and can build-up in the body because of an impaired detoxification process which in turn can alter gene expression. Methylation is one way that the body detoxifies hormones, chemicals and heavy metals. When a gene called MTHFR has a mutation it can impair methylation. It is thought that 40% of people share this defect and it increases the risk of breast cancer, auto-immune and cardiovascular disease. Recent studies link defective methylation to metastatic breast cancer.

**Suggestion:** Get tested! The MTHFR gene mutation can be detected with a simple blood or saliva test. If you have the mutation only use methylated forms of B12 and Folic Acid. (5 methyl folate and methyl cobalamin) Check your supplements. To help your body detoxify, eat a healthy diet, control your weight and exercise

*Managing stress, adopting healthy eating and exercise habits, getting a good night's sleep, and finding good emotional and social support, should be regarded as much a part of cancer treatment as chemotherapy or radiation.*

Many patients are adding improved diet and lifestyle changes, plus oral and IV nutritional supplementation to their anti-cancer plans along with, or *instead of*, conventional medical treatment....

*And why not?*

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# August

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31



# Supplements – When to Use Them – What We Know and Don't Know

The use of dietary supplements among cancer patients is common and the use of these products is often not shared with their cancer doctors. Many Oncologists tell patients not to use anything during treatment because of the fear that supplements will interfere with chemotherapy or other treatments by either decreasing the effectiveness of the drugs or causing side effects that affect the metabolism of the drugs. The current thinking on vitamins and antioxidants is that people should not take high doses of these nutrients if they are currently undergoing cancer treatment as well as when treatment stops. **At present, only small studies exist and well-designed clinical trials are needed to find the true role of supplements in oncology. PLEASE tell your doctor what you are taking.**

**Herbal supplements that can disrupt the toxicity-efficacy balance of chemotherapy:** Echinacea, curcumin, St. John's Wort, Valerian root, Allium.

Probiotics might have beneficial effects on toxicity of anticancer treatments especially radiation therapy. Reported trials vary in utilized probiotic strains, dose of probiotics and vast majority of them are small trials with substantial risk of bias.

**Glutamine** – It has helpful effects on the gastrointestinal tract and may help relieve side effects such as mouth sores and diarrhea. It has a protective effect on nerves.

**Resveratrol** – It has an anti-tumor effect with various types of cancer. Improves chemotherapy success and reduces side-effects; it also increases glutathione levels which help oxygenate and restore healthy cells.

**Maitake D-fraction** – Maitake beta-glucan fractions appear to help reduce the side effects of conventional chemotherapy (and radiation) while at the same time enhancing its effectiveness. Small studies show that maitake extracts slow the growth of tumors and stimulate certain immune cells.

**IV (Intravenous) Vitamin C** – Clinical trials have shown that high-dose IV vitamin is safe and well tolerated in cancer patients receiving chemotherapeutic agents. IV vitamin C was given during chemotherapy and for 6 months after chemotherapy ended. Patients who received IV vitamin C had fewer side effects.

**Milk Thistle** – Increases the toxic effect of chemotherapy drugs against cancer cells; appears to lessen toxicity against healthy cells. May protect the liver from toxic effects of chemotherapy.

**Vitamin E** – Might prevent oral mucositis induced by chemotherapy or radiotherapy.

**Vitamin D** – Higher levels of vitamin D are associated with reduced incidence rates of breast cancer. Vitamin D (calcitriol) is a hormone promoting normal cell growth and differentiation throughout the body. It helps to maintain hormonal balance and a healthy immune system. Testing your vitamin D level is recommended. The 25-hydroxy vitamin D test can be done at many labs. The best way to raise vitamin D levels is to allow limited exposure of your skin to the sun. Sunblock with an SPF of 15 or higher will block 100% of vitamin D production. Most people can generally supplement with 2000 IU vitamin D3 daily.

**Fish Oil** – Fish oil reduces inflammation and may potentially slow cancer progression. A JAMA Oncology study suggests that fish oil may reduce chemo's effectiveness, possibly by increasing resistance within cancer cells.

**Curcumin** – Curcumin is best used before or after chemotherapy with caution given to its use during chemotherapy. It may interfere with chemotherapy's ability to kill cancer cells. It could decrease the effectiveness of chemotherapy – or increase the effects, with toxic results.

**Vitamin D** – Vitamin D has been shown to amplify the effects of many types of chemotherapy so it is best used before or after treatment. Vitamin D3 (calcitriol) is a hormone that promotes normal cell growth and differentiation. It helps to maintain hormonal balance and a healthy immune system.

**Green Tea** – Green tea may pose a concern with some very specific chemotherapy drugs and may negate the benefits of certain anti-cancer drugs. Polyphenols in green tea appear to inhibit two proteins that promote tumor cell growth and migration – namely, the vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF) and the hepatocyte growth factor (HGF). Use organic green tea to avoid pesticide contamination.

**Ave ULTRA** – A wheat germ extract that helps to promote immune system balance by promoting optimal NK cell targeting ability and the coordinated response of macrophages, B-cells and T-Cells. It shows efficacy in reducing treatment side effects, supports healthy cell metabolic regulation and induces cell apoptosis. There are ongoing clinical trials and studies being done.

**DIM (3,3'-diindolylmethane)** – DIM is a phytonutrient found in cruciferous vegetables including cabbage, broccoli, brussels sprouts, kale, cauliflower, and turnips. It was discovered women with breast cancer made too little of the 2-hydroxy or "good" metabolite of estrogen and too much of the 16-hydroxy or "bad" variety. This estrogen dominance can result from inheritance, diet, and exposure to environmental chemicals. DIM supports a healthy estrogen balance.

**It is important to let your doctors know what you want to take when undergoing cancer treatments as well as when treatment ends. Research the supplement thoroughly on a reputable site like PubMed.Gov or Google Scholar and bring the study or studies to your doctor to make your case.**



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# September

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2 Labor Day	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
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# Detection and Follow-up: Finding a New Normal

**After a breast cancer diagnosis and treatment many women wonder how they will be followed to make sure that any recurrence will be found 'early'.** Many breast cancer patients believe that if they get a full battery of tests including a complete blood chemistry, tumor markers, bone scans, liver ultrasound, chest X-ray and CT or MRI of the chest, abdomen, and pelvis and PET scans they will get a better outcome.

However, if you do not have any symptoms, studies have shown that the most effective way to detect recurrence and/or metastatic breast cancer is to have a periodic clinical exam and have your doctor take a detailed history.

A good physical exam should be performed and consists of the following:

- A breast exam
- Examining the chest wall, nodes, skin, and scar
- Checking for liver enlargement
- Checking for bone tenderness
- Listening to the heart and lungs
- Checking the abdomen
- Examining the affected arm for lymphedema

It is recommended that for the first three years after your primary therapy your doctor takes a detailed medical history and performs a physical exam every three to six months, then once or twice yearly for the next two years and annually thereafter depending on your cancer.

**Breast Self Exams:** 40% of breast cancers are discovered by women or their partners. Regular self-exams help women learn the landscape of their own bodies so they notice the slightest change and that may send women to the doctor for a mammogram. They can also help detect breast cancers that mammograms miss.

**Clinical Breast Exam:** Women in their 20s and 30s should have a clinical breast exam as part of a regular health exam every 3 years especially if they are from high risk families. After age 40, women should have a breast exam by a health professional every year. A clinical breast exam may be recommended more frequently if a woman has a strong family history of breast cancer.

**Digital vs. Analog Mammograms:** Digital mammography is significantly better than film mammography in screening women under age 50, or women of any age who have very dense breasts. For women over 50 no significant differences in accuracy were found between the two methods.

There is controversy about mammography both analog and digital. The radiation exposure associated with mammography is a potential risk of this screening and the exposure risk is greater in younger women.

There are NO long term studies of the results of radiation exposures from mammography. However, mammography is considered the best tool for early diagnosis in most women.

**The Timing of Mammograms:** Studies show that mammography may be the most accurate during days 1-9 of the menstrual cycle. This is a low-estrogen, low-progesterone phase and breast tissue tends to be less dense, so mammograms are more apt to spot small, hard-to-see tumors. This is important if you are pre-menopausal.

**Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI):** MRI is used if a breast problem is detected using mammography, physical exam or other imaging. MRI detects nearly all contralateral breast cancers. MRI may offer better sensitivity for detection of breast cancers for women who carry a BRCA-1 or BRCA-2 mutation,

**Ultrasound:** This technology identifies abnormalities in dense tissue, which makes it valuable in young, high risk women. It can determine if a suspicious area is a cyst (always non-cancerous) or solid tissue (dense mass) which may require a biopsy to determine if it is malignant.

**PET Scans** can detect very early cellular changes and show if a breast lump is benign or malignant. PET can detect breast cancer recurrence and evaluate responses to therapy. PET accurately stages axillary lymph node involvement and in the future may make axillary dissection unnecessary for patients who show no lymph node involvement.

**Thermography** has been used as a cancer detection tool but has not been accepted on par with mammography. Mammography used on patients with suspicious clinical exams showed sensitivity of 83%. Mammogram plus a thermogram increased the sensitivity to 93%. Using clinical examination, mammogram and thermogram, the sensitivity was found to be 98%. There are trials going on at present.

**Detection is Not Prevention: Never rely on any technology as your sole method of surveillance. Knowing what is normal for your body is also quite important. Regular self-exams and annual professional exams should be performed. Early detection of a second breast cancer can almost double survival chances.**

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13	14 Columbus Day	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31 Halloween		



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# How to Stay Healthy in a Toxic World

The average household and workplace contain at least 62 toxic chemicals that are used on a daily basis. Chemicals, including organophosphates, flame retardants and phthalates, can be found in food, plastics, furniture, food wrap, cookware, cans, carpets, shower curtains, electronics and even shampoo. They are everywhere around us. We are exposed to phthalates in synthetic fragrances, noxious fumes in oven cleaners, BPA in plastics and register receipts and a host of chemicals in cleaning and personal care products. The ingredients in common household products have been linked to cancer, asthma, reproductive disorders, hormone disruption and neurotoxicity. They get into our bodies through inhalation, ingestion and absorption

**BPA:** It has been linked to breast cancer, obesity, early puberty, and heart disease. It's a hormone disruptor. About 93% of Americans have BPA in their bodies. Studies show that the amount leached is enough to cause breast cancer cells to proliferate in the lab. Found in plastics, canned goods, heat-sensitive paper (used in gas station, grocery stores, and restaurant receipts), used in polycarbonate plastic reusable water bottles, in rigid plastics, the lining of food cans, and other products.

**Solutions:** Avoid all canned foods. Choose fresh and frozen over canned foods;

Avoid clear, shatterproof plastic that contains BPA (usually code 7). Safer plastics are coded 1, 2, 4 & 5; Choose stainless steel, glass and ceramic. Buy PVC free shower curtains; Don't microwave in plastic. Choose glass or ceramic containers. Cover your food with a ceramic plate or an unbleached paper towel instead of plastic wrap; Use non-toxic, reusable stainless steel bottles or BPA free plastics.

**DRY CLEANING:** Conventional dry cleaning uses perchloroethylene (PERC), formaldehyde, naphthalene, benzene. In addition to long-term effects on health, including cancer, short term exposures to air-borne PERC can cause skin irritation, dizziness and headaches.

**Solution:** Use dry cleaners that clean with the ecofriendly CO2 process. Or hand wash with unscented fabric detergent for delicates.

**CLEANING PRODUCTS:** Many cleaning products contain harmful chemicals. They contain the sudsing agents diethanolamine (DEA) and triethanolamine (TEA). They form nitrosamines – which are carcinogens and penetrate the skin.

**Solution:** Make your own. Use baking soda for scouring; vinegar to clean glass.

**PERSONAL CARE PRODUCTS**

Parabens (propyl-, isopropyl-, butyl-, and isobutyl-) Widely used in cosmetic products. Mimics estrogen and has been connected with increased risk of breast cancer and reproductive problems in women.

**Solution:** Read the label! Use brands without these chemicals such as *Aubrey Organics, Dr. Hauschka, Suki's Naturals, Weleda.*

**CHLORINATED PRODUCTS:** Women with breast cancer have 50-60% higher levels of organochlorines in their breast tissue than women without breast cancer. Chlorine is found in many city water supplies, paper products, coffee filters, tampons and swimming pools. Harmful effects are intensified when the fumes are heated, as in the shower or dishwasher.

**Solutions:** Use non-chlorine alternatives to bleach for household cleaning, laundry; Use unbleached toilet paper and tampons; Use natural coffee filters; Use a household water filter; Swim in salt water pools.

**PHTHALATES:** Estrogen-mimicking chemicals used as plastic softeners and solvents. Used in cleaning, laundry, and personal-care products, fabric softeners, perfumes, scented detergents, scented candles, etc. The chemicals go directly into the bloodstream when applied to our skin and are absorbed into the skin from our clothing. Known endocrine disruptors and linked to increased risk of breast cancer, early breast development in girls.

**Solutions:** Avoid items that say fragrance or perfume on the label; look for "phthalate-free" or "no synthetic fragrance". Reduce your exposure by using unscented lotions, laundry detergents, microwaving food in glass containers, use cleaning supplies without scents, avoid air fresheners and plastics labeled No. 3, No. 6 and No 7: Use beeswax candles scented with essential oils.

**RESOURCES**

**Download the Think Dirty App.** [www.thinkdirtyapp.com](http://www.thinkdirtyapp.com). Consumer can identify the potential risks associated with the personal care products they use every day. Think Dirty focuses exclusively on the chemical content of the products in question.

**Environmental Working Group Skin Deep Cosmetic Database** [www.ewg.org/skindeep](http://www.ewg.org/skindeep). Provides the consumer databases with easy-to-navigate ratings for a wide range of products and ingredients on the market. Gives alternatives to use.

**NON-TOXIC CLEANING RECIPES**

**Household Cleaners**

**Mix together:** ¼ c. baking soda, ½ c. vinegar, ½ c. borax, 1 gallon water \*For surfaces that need scouring, try moist salt or baking soda and a green scouring pad.

**Drain Cleaner**

**Pour together:** ½ c. borax in drain followed by 2 cups water

**Window Cleaners**

**Mix together:** 2 tsp. vinegar, 1 qt. warm water OR 2 tbsp. borax, 3 cups water. Rub dry with newspaper to avoid streaking.

**Air Cleaners**

**Houseplants** remove toxins from the air (formaldehyde, benzene, etc. The best plants for removing toxins are Spider plants, Philodendrons, Aloe vera, English ivy, Boston fern.



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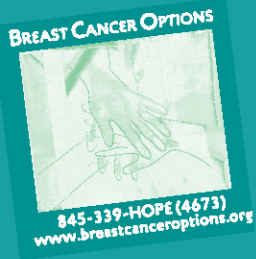
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[hope@BreastCancerOptions.org](mailto:hope@BreastCancerOptions.org)

# November

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
Daylight Savings Ends Fall back	3	4	Election Day	5	6	7
10	Veterans Day	11	12	13	14	15
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	Thanksgiving	28	29
						30



# Breast Cancer Advocacy: for Yourself; in Research; in Policy

**SELF ADVOCACY:** In modern medicine, patients and survivors are empowered to know as much as possible about their disease, its treatments and the potential effects of the disease and/or the treatment on their body. Women are no longer simply passive patients, but rather they are informed consumers, survivors, advocates and activists who are speaking up for themselves and others and speaking out on issues relevant to their treatment and the prevention of breast cancer. Being your own advocate helps to make sure you are receiving the best care possible. Being an informed consumer will help you to work with your health-care providers. Advances in science and technology have increased options for treating breast cancer, but it is advocates that have changed the way people deal with this disease. Survivors, and their supporters need to be effective advocates in the current environment of rising health care costs and restrictive referral policies. Becoming an advocate helps individuals get through their breast cancer experiences, gain a feeling of control over their lives and make an impact for others.

**Why is Self-Advocacy Important?** By being a pro-active, education cancer patient/survivor, you can share treatment decision making with your medical team, impact the health care you receive and the quality of your life.

**Make the Most of Your Medical Appointments.**

- Bring someone with you to your appointments to make sure that your questions are asked and answered. Breast Cancer Options has trained survivors to go on visits with newly diagnosed patients. They are there for support, to ensure that important questions get asked and are answered, as a resource to verify exactly what was discussed at the visit, and to share their experience as survivors.
- Bring a written list of all questions you have. Number your concerns in order of importance. Let your doctor know you have a list so he or she can set aside time during the appointment to go over the questions with you. Both you and the person with you should write down the answers so that nothing is missed
- As much as you can, make your questions specific and brief..
- Try to remember important information about your cancer or other symptoms that you may have forgotten and write it down.
- Make sure you understand. If you don't know what something means, don't be afraid to say you don't understand and ask the doctor to explain again.
- Try repeating the information back to your doctor – "So you mean I should...?"

**Advocacy in Research - You Can Make a Difference!** Participation in a clinical trial is an obvious way for patients and survivors to be involved in research. Yet only 3-5% of eligible patients and/or survivors participate in clinical trials. One reason may be that the trials aren't focused on research patients care about. That is changing with the involvement of patients as partners in research, from the development of an idea through study design, implementation, evaluation, dissemination of results and translation to the clinic. Beginning with the National Breast Cancer Coalition (NBCC) demand in the early 90's for a seat at the table in peer review of grant proposals and the establishment of the Department of Defense Breast Cancer Research Program (DoDBCRP), patients and patient advocates have steadily increased their roles as partners in research, making a unique contribution by giving a "face" to the disease and reminding researchers of the human element. Their participation ensures relevance of research to patient primary concerns. Here are a few resources to learn how you can become engaged in research: NBCC Project LEAD, National Cancer Institute Office of Advocacy Relations (NCIOAR), California Breast Cancer Research Program (CBCRP), Research Advocacy Network (RAN), Patient Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORRI) Patient Engagement Program, U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

**Advocacy as a Tool for Policy Change:** Political advocacy has helped breast cancer patients have more access to screening, earlier diagnosis and better treatments. Breast cancer advocates have been instrumental in increasing federal funding for breast cancer research and have helped to pass laws that provide cancer treatment coverage to low-income, uninsured women. Advocates have changed the conversation, challenging corporations; the pharmaceutical industry; local, state and federal legislators; healthcare institutions and providers; health agencies and the media. What You Can Do: In addition to those listed above, check out advocacy organizations such as Breast Cancer Options, Breast Cancer Prevention Partners, Breast Cancer Action, and Silent Spring Institute, among others, which have waged many effective campaigns instrumental in changing business practices and helping to pass legislation to protect the public from toxic exposures, address inequities in access to medical care and inform the public about actions to take. Tell your state and federal legislators about the gaps you see in patient care – sharing personal stories - because they need to understand the issues patients are facing in order to promote effective legislation.

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# December

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
Hanukkah 22	23	24	Christmas Day 25	Kwanzaa 26	27	28
29	30	New Year's Eve 31				



# About Breast Cancer Options

If you have breasts or know someone who does... Please show your support

## BREAST CANCER OPTIONS

Breast Cancer Options is a grassroots, nonprofit organization and the largest provider of peer support, advocacy and education services in the Hudson Valley. Our services are unique

**We depend on our community to accomplish our work.**

Please send a check payable to

Breast Cancer Options  
101 Hurley Avenue, Suite 10  
Kingston, NY 12401

...or make a credit card donation online on our web site

[www.breastcanceroptions.org](http://www.breastcanceroptions.org)

...or call us at

**845-339-HOPE (4673)**

## Thank you

All donations are tax-deductible and truly appreciated! All of our services are free.

Breast Cancer Options is a non-profit, tax exempt 501(c)3 corporation.

**Breast Cancer Options (BCO)** is an organization of breast cancer survivors, advocates and healthcare professionals who understand that when you are diagnosed with breast cancer, you are suddenly faced with some of the most important decisions you will ever make about your own healthcare. When you explore your options, we want you to understand:

- You do not have to face all this, including physician visits, by yourself.
- You are important and deserve answers. We will help you get them.
- What information and sources are credible and reliable.
- Which lifestyle changes and complementary therapies can be integrated in treatment.

### Support

- Camp Lightheart – A free sleepover camp for children who have a mom with breast cancer or have lost their mom.
- Retreat for women with metastatic breast cancer.
- Companion/Advocate Program – Trained, knowledgeable and sympathetic breast cancer survivors can accompany newly diagnosed patients to medical visits.
- Peer-led Support Groups – Community-based in Ulster, Dutchess, Greene, Columbia and Orange counties. See our web site or call for locations and times.
- Peer-to-Peer Mentoring – Talk to someone who has gone through the same experience.
- Telephone and E-mail Consultations – Questions are answered with information from reliable sources.
- Massage Program

### Education/Information

- Annual Healthy Lifestyles Calendar
- BCO News E-mail updates: Sent out weekly to Breast Cancer Survivors and Healthcare Professionals all over the world. Sign up on our website
- Breast Cancer Options web site offers a variety of up-to-date information and resources.
- Annual Integrative Medicine Conference: Top professionals in complementary/integrative therapies speak and present workshops on the most current modalities.
- Healthy Lifestyles Program: A series of workshops to look at the ways we can make small, easy changes in our daily lives to improve our health after a cancer diagnosis.

### Advocacy

- BCO is an advocate for breast cancer patients at the regional, state and national levels.
- We can help with referrals for insurance and legal problems.
- BCO is a member of the New York State Breast Cancer Network.

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## 18 Steps to a Healthier Life for You and Your Family

A growing body of evidence shows that healthy lifestyle factors like a good diet and regular exercise provide significant benefits, possibly offering protection against cancer recurrences about on a par with chemotherapy and the newer hormonal and drug treatments. If you combine these risk-reducing habits and also limit your exposure to toxins you will benefit even more.

**1 Exercise!** Breast cancer patients will be 50% less likely to die from the disease than sedentary women if they exercise on a regular basis. Women undergoing treatments for breast cancer benefit from moderate intensity, regular aerobic activity.

**2 Control your weight.** Weight is a bit confusing. If you are overweight before menopause, your risk of breast cancer is lower than average. If you are overweight after menopause, your risk of breast cancer is higher than average.

**3 Eat an organically grown diet** whenever possible. Your diet should contain fruits and vegetables, complex carbohydrates, organic protein and healthy-fats. Breast cancer has been linked to some pesticides used on non-organic fruits and vegetables and estrogen-like hormones used in raising livestock.

**4 Spend eight hours a night in darkness** to encourage normal melatonin levels. The hormone Melatonin is released at night and has cancer-fighting properties. It's the reason you get sleepy when it's dark and research indicates that melatonin also puts cancer cells to sleep. Make sure you get regular exposure to bright light during the daytime.

**5 Cut down on EMR Exposures.** Exposure to the energy fields generated from cell phones, night lights and electrical devices disrupt hormones. Sleep at least 3-5 feet away from outlets; unplug devices. EMFs can disrupt your pineal gland and melatonin production. Turn off the WiFi at night

**6 Drink filtered or bottled water,** not city water that contains chlorine and fluoride. A simple water filter can now serve as a valuable safeguard against toxic substances and cancer. Use a BPA free container.

**7 Avoid bleached products,** i.e. coffee filters, paper, napkins, toilet tissue and tampons. Using bleached coffee filters alone can result in a lifetime exposure to dioxin that exceeds acceptable risks. The FDA detected dioxins and dozens of other substances in conventional tampons.

**8 Avoid carrying your cellphone anywhere on your body. When your phone is on it emits radiation intermittently even** when you are not making a call. Wearing a cellphone tucked into your bra or in your pocket for hours a day gives those areas of your body continuous radiation exposure.

**9 Learn how to handle stress.** Levels of the stress hormone cortisol rise with increased stress. High cortisol levels suppress immune response by reducing natural killer cell activity. These cells are important in surveillance against malignant cells and for destroying viruses and tumor cells.

**10 Use wet cleaning rather than dry cleaning** which contains PERC (perchloroethylene). If you must use traditional dry cleaning, open the plastic bags on your clothing and air them out before putting them in a closet or on your body.

**11 Use personal care products without chemicals** like parabens or phthalates. They disrupt normal hormone function and are found in many personal care products. By law all skin care products must be labeled with the ingredients in descending order of their quantity in the product

**12 Avoid alcohol.** Alcohol can increase levels of estrogen and other hormones associated with hormone-receptor-positive breast cancer. Alcohol also may increase risk by damaging DNA in cells. Compared to women who don't drink at all, women who have three alcoholic drinks per week have a 15% higher risk of breast cancer.

**13 Reduce or eliminate purchase of plastic products** Some plastics leach hormone-disrupting chemicals into whatever they come in contact with. Polyvinyl chloride (PVC) plastics are dangerous and used in toys that children put in their mouths, so keep an eye out for nontoxic toys.

**14 Take low-dose aspirin (81mg).** Use of low-dose aspirin at least 3 times a week was linked to a 20% risk reduction for cancers known as hormone-receptor positive, HER2 negative – the most common breast cancer subtype

**15 Do not use pesticides or herbicides** on your lawn or garden. They mimic estrogen, a known breast cancer risk factor. A cup of salt in a gallon of vinegar will kill weeds.

**16 Tune into your body.** Get to know what is normal for you.

**17 Limit exposure to radiation from medical imaging tests.** Make sure X-rays, CT scans, and PET scans are medically necessary.

**18 Learn to read labels;** become an informed consumer.