



STAYING HEALTHY AFTER BREAST CANCER

Now that more people are living after cancer, the focus has turned to helping them stay healthy. These tips will help you begin some healthy habits or to keep healthy habits.

Breast Cancer Follow-up

- **One of the main things that you can do is to follow-up with your doctors and nurses after treatment so they can keep an eye on your health. Follow-up is vital to check your health. Follow up tests may be needed. This guide will help you know what to expect after treatment.**
- **Have an exam by an oncology doctor every 4 to 6 months for the first 5 years, then every 12 months after that. Have a clinical breast exam performed by a health care provider at least every 12 months.**
- **Have a mammogram every 12 months. If you had surgery and radiation therapy instead of mastectomy, have a mammogram of the treated breast 6 to 12 months after radiation ends. Then have one of both breasts every 12 months. If you have had bilateral mastectomies, then you will no longer have mammograms.**
- **Have a pelvic exam and digital rectal exam (35 and older) every 12 months. New recommendations suggest that if you have had normal Pap tests, you can go 3 years between Pap tests, but a yearly pelvic exam is still recommended.**
- **Your bone health should be checked every 2 years after the age of 50, and before that if you are taking an aromatase inhibitor (such as Arimidex, Femara, or Aromasin). Women who have not gone through menopause will not take these medications, and usually don't need to have their bone density tested until after menopause.**



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- Do monthly breast self-exam. You should do this even if you have little or no breast tissue after surgery. Be sure to get up behind the collar bone and into the armpit. The Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation Suggests:
 - **Lie down with a pillow under your right shoulder:**
 - Use the pads of the 3 middle fingers of your left hand to check your right breast.
 - Press using light, medium and firm pressure in a circle without lifting your fingers off the skin.
 - Follow an up and down pattern.
 - Feel for changes in your breast area, above and below your collarbone and in your armpit.
 - Repeat on your left breast using your right hand.
 - **Stand in front of a mirror and look for any changes from normal. Inspect your breasts and chest using these steps:**
 - Hold your arms at your sides.
 - Hold your arms over your head.
 - Press your hands on your hips and tighten your chest muscles.
 - Bend forward with your hands on your hips.
 - **See your doctor or nurse if you notice any of these things in your breasts:**
 - Lump, hard knot or thickening.
 - Swelling, warmth, redness or darkening.
 - Change in size or skin.
 - Dimpling or puckering of the skin.
 - Nipple discharge that starts suddenly.
 - New pain in one spot that does not go away.
 - **On the side where you had surgery:**
 - Get to know how the skin, tissue and scar look and feel.
 - Look for changes from one month to the next.



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- If you have concerns, share this with your doctor.

Exercise:

Exercise has been shown to help your quality of life, heart health, fatigue, body image and happiness. Exercise should include both strength training and aerobic exercise. Exercise has also been shown to lower body weight and change the body's make-up to include more lean muscle mass and less fat. Walking, even for short periods of time (such as 25 minutes 5 days a week) have been shown to be good for those who have had breast cancer.

Diet:

A healthy diet after breast cancer can help women lose any weight they may have gained during treatment as well as reduce fatigue and improve body image. Having both a good healthy diet and getting fit will help with weight loss. Some good choices include adding more fruits and vegetables to your diet, eating leaner cuts of meat, adding more poultry and fish. Also choosing milk products and cooking oils with low fat will help. Drink plenty of water; at least 64 ounces per day, and more if you exercise, drink any alcohol, or the weather is very hot. Try adding more natural and organic foods, and less processed foods to your diet. These offer the same nutrients but with less chemical additives that may affect your health.

Bone Health:

Keeping your bones strong is vital after treatment for breast cancer. You can see how your bone health is by having a bone mineral density test (after age 50). To improve bone health, women should add more calcium to their diet and exercise on a regular basis.



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Other Healthy Behaviors

Please think about these:

- Stop smoking.
- Limit alcohol intake (the recommendation is that women should limit to 1 alcoholic drink per day).
- Limit how much time you spend in the sun, and use sunblock! Some cancer treatments put you at higher risk for development of skin cancers.
- Be screened for other cancers like colon, cervical and skin cancers.
- Also be screened for other health problems that you are at risk of having.

When Do You Need To Seek Help?

You should talk with your doctors and nurses about any changes you are making in your routine after treatment. They may be able to help you make good choices. Also, if you have any questions or concerns about your health between visits or if you notice any changes in your breast(s) or symptoms, contact your doctor. Talk with your doctor about them and have these changes checked.

Useful websites:

- <http://www.cancer.org/healthy/index?sitearea=PED>
- <http://www.breastcancer.org/>



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