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HEALTHY LIVING

BREAST CANCER AWARENESS

Avoid Toxins to Modify Your Breast Cancer Risk

BY AYO K. BANKOLE, ND, PA-C

The environment is the likely elephant in the room regarding your risk of breast cancer. In general, the inheritable risk for cancer is less than twenty percent, and with breast cancer, the genetic risk is as small as five percent. This suggests that up to ninety-five percent of breast cancer risk comes from our environment. Stated differently, the toxins in our air, food, home and work environment conspire to cause DNA damage that may set the stage for breast cancer development later in life.

There are now more than 200,000 cases of breast cancer diagnosed annually and breast cancer is the seventh leading cause of death. The common and deadly nature of breast cancer underscore our need for health policy makers to more proactively identify environmental risk factors associated with breast cancer. The preponderance of environmental risk factors associated with breast cancer suggest that even timely advances in the treatment of breast cancer, earlier diagnosis, and even genetic testing will not likely stem the tide of this heart-breaking disease and that a broader approach is required. While efforts continue to be made in these areas, there are actions you can take to decrease your risk of breast cancer.

Dodge Estrogen Mimickers. Currently there are several dozen chemicals in common everyday use shown to promote tumor growth and breast cancer in laboratory studies. It is believed that the majority of these chemicals, collectively known as endocrine-disrupting chemicals, mimic estrogen. Estrogen is a promoter of breast development and breast cancer. Estrogen mimickers promote breast cancer in mechanisms similar to estrogens effect. Laboratory studies and review of accidental occupational exposures have identified organochloride pesticides, DDE, DDT, several chemicals found in plastics, and detergents as having an estrogen promoting effect.

Decrease your body's burden of estrogen mimickers by choosing organically grown produce. Conventionally grown peaches, apples, bell pepper, celery and nectarines are the top five pesticide contaminated produce. Also choose organically raised poultry and beef reared without the use of estrogen in place of conventionally raised animals. To avoid phthalates and bisphenol A found in plastics replace plastic food storage contain-

ers with glass ones and drink filtered tap water from glass, stainless steel, high density polyethylene, or bisphenol A-free bottles. This also clears the expense and waste generated from the use of bottled water.

Limit Industrial Chemical Exposure. Several industrial chemicals have been identified as having a potential role in causing breast cancer. The solvent PCE used in dry cleaning is one. If you are not using a "green dry cleaning" business, stow your newly dry cleaned clothes in the trunk as you commute home. Once home allow them to air out forty-eight hours on your back porch to avoid polluting your bedroom air with PCEs. Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons from auto exhaust and charred meats can cause DNA damage and increase breast cancer risk. Instead of grilling or high temperature broiling of meats choose baking as a safer option. Also avoid locations and times of high traffic areas during recreational biking, jogging and walking. PCBs and dioxins are industrial by products that heavily contaminate our food chain and have both been linked to breast cancer. Highest concentrations are found in conventional butter and farmed-raised salmon, so go for organic butter and wild-

caught Alaskan salmon instead.

Does dietary fat cause breast cancer? The National Institute of Health Women's Initiative Study found that a diet comprised of twenty percent fat or less along with ample vegetables, fruit and fiber was associated with a reduced breast cancer risk. An interesting note is that some researchers have long questioned if the risk from dietary fat is actually incurred from the toxins stored within animal fat as opposed to the fat itself. Either way, I believe it is still a good idea to

limit dietary cholesterol and saturated fat while insuring a diet ample in fresh vegetables rich in antioxidants.

Be Your Own Health Advocate. Evidence suggests that environmental toxins may play a tremendous role in increasing breast cancer risk. While we encourage public policy makers to place more emphasis on investigating the link between environmental chemicals and cancer, and to act quickly to remove chemicals from commerce at the slightest evidence of a link to cancer, do your part to limit toxin exposure. Be your own health advocate by avoiding exposures to endocrine-disrupting chemicals and other industrial chemicals implicated in breast cancer promotion.

Dr. Ago Bankole received his Naturopathic Doctor degree from Southwest College of Naturopathic Medicine and his B.S. degree from Howard University. He treats diabetes, cardiovascular disease, obesity, environmental toxicity and pain syndromes. He has advanced training and certification in environmental medicine giving him appreciation of the role toxic chemicals in air, food and water play in disease. He provides medically supervised detoxification and uses chelation for heavy metal toxicity. Dr. Bankole also provides prolotherapy and platelet-rich plasma for the treatment of arthritic or injured joints of the spine and extremities.

■ 11th Annual Race For the Cure

Oct. 18 The Inland Empire Affiliate of Susan G. Komen for the Cure will hold its 11th Annual Race for the Cure on Sunday, Oct. 18 at The Promenade in Temecula. The Inland Empire Race for the Cure has grown to more than 12,000 participants and nearly 500 survivors. Proceeds from the 2008 Komen Inland Empire Race for the Cure funded \$345,620 to local organizations that provide breast cancer awareness, treatment and services. In 2008, approximately 182,460 American women were diagnosed with invasive breast cancer and 67,770 American women diagnosed with noninvasive breast cancer. 40,480 will die from this disease. In 2008, approximately 2,030 American men were diagnosed, and 450 will die from this disease. There are more than two million breast cancer survivors in the United States today. For more information about the Race for the Cure, call (951) 304-9500 or visit www.komenie.org.

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