



Women's Health

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Breast Cancer Less Extensive Surgery May Be O.K.

Breast cancer surgery may never be routine, but there are standard ways to go about it. One rule is that if there is any involvement in the lymph nodes under the arm, all those nodes must go. Now, research funded by the National Cancer Institute calls that protocol into question.

In a study of nearly 900 breast cancer patients with early stage disease (known as T1 and T2 tumors), researchers assigned half to a group that had standard surgery, radiation and chemo as well as extensive node removal. The other half had only the sentinel nodes removed—the ones that were tested for the presence of the cancer—but their treatment was otherwise the same.

The five-year survival rates for both groups were similar—about 92 percent. There was no recurrence of cancer at that point in 83.0 percent of the women who had the extensive node surgery. For the ones who had the limited surgery, the rate was a slightly lower 82.2 percent—a statistically insignificant difference.

The findings clearly apply only to women with T1 or T2 tumors—about 20 percent of breast cancer patients—but even in those cases, doctors and women must balance the risks and benefits in making a treatment choice. For those who opt for the traditional surgery, risks include infection and later pain and mobility problems in the arm.

Source: *TIME*, February 21, 2011

Air Force Rape Common and Unreported

The Air Force will release a survey later this week that finds 1 in 5 women say they have been sexually assaulted since joining the service, according to a March 17 report by *The Christian Science Monitor*. Of the 18.9 percent of female airmen who reported having been assaulted, 58 percent said that they had been raped and 20 percent said they had been sodomized, which the military defines as nonconsensual oral or anal sex.

While the data suggest the sexual-assault rate in the Air Force is roughly equal to what it is in the broader civilian population, the survey points to unique challenges presented by the culture of the service. The vast majority of crimes are committed by male airmen on female airmen, and nearly half of rape victims said they did not report the crime because they "did not want to cause trouble in their unit."

The Air Force survey, in which 18,834 male and female airmen were interviewed between July and August 2010, had a response rate of nearly 19 percent and is expected to serve as a new baseline for tracking the crime. The survey, conducted by Gallup, will likely be repeated every 18 to 24 months.

Senator Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) introduced legislation that requires the Department of Defense to create a system for storing and retaining digital records in all military cases of rape, sexual assault and sexual harassment. [Currently there is no uniform manner across the various military branches of service for the retention of such documentation.]

Source: *Women's eNews*, March 17 and April 5, 2011

High Cholesterol: The Gender Gap

Heart disease is the leading killer of both women and men, but when it comes to cholesterol, the sexes were not created equal.

Before menopause, naturally high levels of estrogen can help women maintain healthy cholesterol levels and protect them from heart disease. When estrogen starts to decline during the years preceding menopause (average age of menopause 51) or by removal of the ovaries, high-density lipoproteins (HDL, or "good" cholesterol) typically drop, too.

The National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute recommends that both men and women begin having their cholesterol tested every five years in their 20s. One exception. Young women who take birth control pills may need earlier and more frequent testing because the hormones in oral contraceptives may affect cholesterol levels and may enhance coagulation (blood clotting). The estrogen in oral contraceptives appears to increase HDL, triglycerides and total cholesterol levels, yet it decreases low-density lipoproteins (LDL, or "bad" cholesterol). Progestin in oral contraceptives seems to have the opposite effect. If you take oral contraceptives, discuss cholesterol testing and other risk factors with your physician.

Source: *High Cholesterol, the Gender Gap*, Laura Flynn McCarthy, *iVillage*, February 15, 2011

United States Sees Record Drop in Teen Births

U.S. teen birth rates showed notable decreases throughout most states and across all racial and ethnic groups from 2007-09, federal researchers reported Wednesday.

Forty-five states reported significant declines in births to teens 18 to 19 years old from 2007 to 2009. Thirty-one states also reported fewer births to 15-to-17-year-olds in that time period, according to preliminary data analyzed by the National Center for Health Statistics, a division of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Despite recent notable declines, the U.S. still leads the developed world in numbers of births to teenagers, which concerns public health officials.

Source: *HealthDay News*, February 2, 2011

A Cancer Warning Not to Ignore

Nonmelanoma skin cancer is the most common and curable cancer, but it could also be a canary in the coal mine, report researchers at the Medical University of South Carolina. People who get this cancer may be nearly 50 percent more likely to develop other cancers later in life. And if you're diagnosed between ages 25 and 44, you may face an even greater rise in risk, possibly because the early onset indicates a genetic predisposition to cancer. If you've had this disease, be vigilant about getting other cancer screening tests. —Lauren Gelman

Source: *Prevention.com*, March 2011

Pregnant? Watch the Tuna

Pregnant women should avoid canned tuna, according to Consumers Union which recently found mercury in all 42 cans and pouches of tuna tested. Just 2.5 ounces of any of the "white" (albacore) tuna samples would exceed the safe daily limit set by the EPA. And though "light" tuna generally has less mercury than white tuna, some samples had levels high enough to be of concern. In contrast, for years the government has said it's okay for pregnant women to eat up to 6 ounces of white tuna and 12 ounces of light tuna a week. Pregnant women should also avoid shark, king mackerel, tilefish, and swordfish due to high mercury levels.

Source: *University of California, Berkeley Wellness Letter*, April 2011

A Strike Against Cranberry Juice?

Researchers found that drinking 8 ounces of cranberry juice cocktail twice daily didn't reduce the chance of getting a second urinary-tract infection, according to a study in the January 2011 issue of *Clinical Infectious Diseases*. This contradicts earlier research that showed that cranberry juice or capsules helped prevent bladder infections.

Source: *Consumer Reports on Health*, April 2011

Keeping Your Arteries Healthy

A high-potassium diet helps keep arteries healthy and may lower your risk of stroke. Your best sources: fruits and vegetables. Keep your blood pressure and stroke risk down by eating more potassium-rich foods. A recent study in the *Journal of the American College of Cardiology* found that a diet high in potassium can reduce the risk of stroke by more than 20 percent. Americans get so little daily potassium that the government considers our collective lack of the mineral to be a public health concern. Potassium helps protect against strokes by blunting the effects of sodium on blood pressure. High blood pressure is the number one cause of stroke. You can also help take the pressure off your arteries by reducing your sodium intake. In addition to kicking your saltshaker to the curb (or at least relegating it to your cupboard), boost potassium by stocking up on fruits and vegetables. Your top crops for potassium: sweet potatoes, tomatoes and bananas.

Source: *Cleveland Clinic's customercare@360-5.com*, March 30, 2011

Tooth Loss, Memory Loss May Be Related

Older people who lose their teeth may be at greater risk for dementia, according to a study published online December 31, 2010, in the journal *Behavioral and Brain Functions*. Researchers found that among a population of 4,000 men and women 65 and older who received a dental exam and psychiatric assessment, those participants who had lost many or all of their teeth were more likely to have experienced loss of memory or to have developed mild to moderate AD. The research suggests that inflammatory processes linked to gum infections and tooth loss may promote brain inflammation that can kill brain cells and lead to problems with memory functioning.

Source: *Massachusetts General Hospital Mind, Mood and Memory*, March 2010

HDL and Alzheimer's

Healthy levels of HDL ("good") blood cholesterol may reduce the risk of memory loss and Alzheimer's disease.

The latest study to suggest this, in the *Archives of Neurology*, found that people over 65 with high HDL levels above 55 md/dl were 60 percent less likely to develop Alzheimer's during the next decade. One theory: HDL may help block the formation of plaque in the brain. Ways to boost HDL include losing excess weight, exercising vigorously, drinking moderately, and limiting starch and sugary foods.

Source: *University of California, Berkeley Wellness Letter*, April 2011

Walking for a Speedy Recovery

If you find yourself in the hospital recovering from an illness, literally getting back on your feet quickly is key to a speedy recovery, even if it's just a brief stroll down the hall. A new study from the University of Texas found that patients age 65 or older who increased their activity by 12 minutes of slow walking each day, within the first 48 hours of hospital admission for a non-orthopedic injury, were discharged, on average, two days earlier than those who remained in bed.

Source: *Archives of Internal Medicine*, vol. 170, p. 1942, as seen in *The Johns Hopkins Medical Letter Health After 50*, April 2011.

BPW/NJ

Women's Health Newsletter

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PURPOSE: To provide, with the support of BPW/NJ, pertinent, up-to-date information—including legislation—on health issues affecting women.

The information contained in this newsletter is intended to educate women about subjects pertinent to their health; it is not intended to act as a substitute for consultation with a physician.

The GYN Mistake Smart Women Make

If you've checked gynecologist visits off your to-do list because you're finished having kids, you could be making a fatal mistake. Late-stage cervical cancer is most often found in women over 50, according to a new report from the CDC. This is a reality directly attributable to the fact that women this age don't always get regular Pap tests, which can detect the cancer early. To protect yourself, have an annual checkup and a Pap every 3 years if you've had three normal results in a row. —LM

Source: *Prevention*, April 2011

Obesity Increases Heart Risks Regardless of Fat Distribution

Obese women had the same increased risk of heart disease regardless of whether they were "apple-shaped," with fat deposits situated around their waist, or "pear-shaped," with fat distributed around their hips, a team of international researchers reported in *The Lancet*. The study of more than 220,000 adults contradicts previous research suggesting that people with central obesity have a greater risk of cardiovascular disease than people with general obesity. Their results suggest that while monitoring weight and fat levels may be important to try to get people to change their lifestyles, the best predictors of future heart risk are measures of blood pressure, cholesterol and history of diabetes.

Source: *Reuters*, March 10, 2011

Curb Your Diet-Soda Habit

In a study of more than 3,200 women, those who drank two or more servings per day of artificially sweetened soda had 30 percent decline in kidney function, say Harvard Medical School scientists. The women who swigged down regular soda had no such decline, so the researchers believe that artificial sweeteners are a possible culprit. There's no need to deprive yourself completely—drinking just one serving a day didn't have any effect.

Source: *Women's Health/April 2010, WomensHealthMag.com*

Forget the Treadmill. Get a Dog.

Among dog owners who went for regular walks, 60 percent met federal criteria for regular moderate or vigorous exercise, a new study says. If you're looking for the latest in home exercise equipment, you may want to consider something with four legs and a wagging tail. Several studies now show that dogs can be powerful motivators to get people moving. Not only are dog owners more likely to take regular walks, but new research shows that dog walkers are more active overall than people who don't have dogs. One study even found that older people are more likely to take regular walks if the walking companion is canine rather than human.

Source: *The New York Times, Well*,
Tara Parker-Pope on Health,
March 14, 2011



Do You Spend Most of Your Day Sitting Down?

Taking more breaks can help boost your health. From sitting at a desk all day to plopping down in front of the TV at night, most of us lead a very sedentary lifestyle. Even if we work out regularly, all this downtime takes a toll on our health. Turns out, people who sit on their duff all day without taking breaks are at greater risk of a slew of health issues than those who get up and walk around regularly. Sitting for prolonged periods of time is linked to larger waistlines, higher blood pressure, lower levels of "good" HDL cholesterol, increased levels of triglycerides, and higher levels of inflammation. And that even goes for gym rats. According to the study's researchers, 30 to 60 minutes of activity a day can't undo the effects of sitting for eight to 12 hours at a time. But standing up and walking around periodically throughout the day can help. They recommend standing during phone calls and meetings, walking over to a person's desk instead of e-mailing them, and making frequent visits to the water cooler and bathroom.

Source: *Cleveland Clinic's customercare@360-5.com*, February 21, 2011

Blood Clot Thrombosis

Every five minutes someone dies from a blood clot or deep vein thrombosis (DVT). Each year between 100,000-180,000 Americans die as the result of pulmonary embolism, a complication from blood clots in the lungs. The Vascular Disease Foundation urges Americans, especially women, to learn about the risks of venous blood clots to help prevent these deaths. While men and women are at equal risk, the risk for deep vein thrombosis, or blood clots, varies depending on where a woman is in her lifecycle, her hormone levels, and if she has a family history of clotting disorders.

Source: *Newswise*, March 3, 2011 as seen in *SWHR E-News*, March 17, 2011

Higher Vitamin D Intake Needed to Reduce Cancer Risk.

Researchers at the University of California, San Diego School of Medicine and Creighton University School of Medicine in Omaha have reported that markedly higher intake of vitamin D is needed to reach blood levels that can prevent or markedly cut the incidence of breast cancer and several other major diseases than had been originally thought. The findings are published February 21 in the journal *Anticancer Research*.

Source: *Newswise*, February 22 as in *SWHR E-News*,
March 3, 2011

Snuggling Up With Fido

Having a pet can lower blood pressure and stress levels. However, if your immune system is weak, it may not be wise to give your dog or cat a smooch or let him sleep with you, a recent study shows.

Source: *readersdigest.com*, April 2011

HOT flashes

♀ Nuts give sweet or savory dishes flavor, crunch, and a heart healthy punch. Even better? Walnuts score highest of all nuts in the omega-3s that protect against heart disease. And their stores of fiber and unsaturated fat can help you lower “bad” LDL cholesterol naturally. To preserve taste and prevent spoiling, keep shelled nuts refrigerated in an airtight container for up to six months or in the freezer for up to a year. —By Dana Speers

Source: *Prevention.com*, February 2011

♀ Tooth-Saving Tip...Don't Brush! At least not if you've just been downing soda, wine, citrus fruits, tomatoes, or coffee. “Brushing after you eat acidic foods like these actually pushes the acid into your tooth enamel even further,” warns Nancy Rosen, DMD, a dentist practicing in New York City. And this can lead to sensitivity and unsightly erosion at best, and more cavities at worst. Instead, she says, swish with water, then wait at least 30 minutes to an hour before you break out the toothpaste.

Source: *Health.com*, March 2011

♀ To eat more fruit...reorganize your fridge. Placing produce on the middle shelf of the refrigerator, rather than out of sight in the crisper drawer, helped women in a Cornell University study increase their intake of fresh fruit and veggies by 230 percent. To effortlessly up your intake of health treats while cutting back on fattening fare, place 100 percent juice, low-fat milk and other low-calorie drinks on the top shelf; put fruit, veggies and lean protein on the second and third shelves for easy access; hide tempting treats in the crisper drawer; and load the door with low-cal, flavor-packed dressings, seasonings and more.

Source: *First for women*, January 10, 2011

♀ Alcohol: Is it good or bad? There are mixed messages about the health effects of drinking some alcohol. Scientific evidence can help you weigh the risks and benefits, but it's clear that having a few drinks per week appears to increase breast cancer risk.

Source: www.S.komen.org/Global/OurGlobalReach.html

♀ Cheers! More evidence that moderate drinking is good for your health. Having a drink after work may help keep your heart healthy, according to two meta-analyses from scientists at the University of Calgary. Overdoing it, however, can be dangerous to your health, increasing the risk of heart disease, cancer and depression.

Source: *TIME*, February 23, 2011, as seen in *SWHR E-NEWS*, March 3, 2011

♀ Better than Butter? Most nutritionists say olive oil is healthier than butter, but that shouldn't give us free rein to pour it on. Diners were given olive oil or butter with their bread at two different Italian restaurants. Those using olive oil ate 26 percent more fat calories on every piece of bread compared with the more frugal butter users. It seems that we feel less guilty about overindulging in olive oil. But remember, 26 percent more oil is 26 percent more fat—so be sure to use that olive oil sparingly.

Source: *AARP The Magazine*, March/April 2011

♀ You can beat your genes. If breast cancer runs in your family, don't think you're destined to get it. A University of Rochester Medical Center study found that postmenopausal women who led healthy lifestyles—even those with a family history of the disease—reduced their risk. The best Rx? Work up a sweat five days a week, maintain a normal body weight, and stick to one glass of alcohol a day or less.

Source: *January/February 2011*

♀ Hot flashes could benefit the heart. The dreaded hot flash, experienced by three out of four women during menopause, is believed to have an upside. New research suggests that women who suffer from hot flashes and night sweats may be at lower risk for cardiovascular disease, stroke, and death.

Source: *Ivanhoe Insider*, webdoctor@ivanhoe.com, March 2, 2011

♀ Botox for migraines. The Food and Drug Administration recently approved Botox injections for people who suffer from migraines more than 14 days a month. The approval is based on two recent studies of nearly 1,400 adults, which found that those who were treated with injections about every 12 weeks experienced fewer days with the headaches than the people who were given a placebo. But the treatment comes with potential risks, such as facial paralysis and eyelid drooping.

Source: *Consumer Reports on Health*, February 2011

♀ Spot stealthy salt. Up to 75 percent of the salt in our diets comes from packaged foods. This simple trick can keep your sodium intake in check: “Look for a 1-to-1 ratio of calories to sodium or less,” says David L. Katz, MD, MPH, director of the Yale Prevention Research Center. If a food has 150 calories per serving, it should have no more than 150 mg of sodium. Keep your intake below 1,500 mg a day.

Source: *Prevention*, <http://www.prevention.com/34-health-skills>, March 4, 2011

♀ Snoozing less than six hours nightly spikes inflammatory hormones and hurts blood vessel function, possibly upping your risk for heart disease and stroke, a report from the Emory University School of Medicine shows. Aim for seven to eight hours.

Source: *SELF*, March 2011

♀ Even one occasional cigarette or a brief exposure to secondhand smoke can trigger a heart attack, stroke, or sudden death, according to a major new report from the Surgeon General called “How Tobacco Smoke Causes Disease.” Chemicals in tobacco smoke have many immediate effects on the body that increase cardiovascular risk. While most people associate tobacco with lung cancer, smoking-related cardiovascular disease kills far more people.

Source: *University of California, Berkeley Wellness Letter*, April 2011

♀ Water Bottles. You've provably heard that many hard, reusable plastic water bottles could be bad for you because they may contain BPA or bisphenol A, another endocrine disruptor according to the National Institute of Environment Health Sciences. “For adults, the biggest concern with BPA is that it may increase the risk of breast cancer in women and reduce sperm counts in men,” says Dr. Carpenter, who explains that BPA can leach out into the water in the bottle. To be safe, sip from an unlined stainless steel or BPA free plastic bottle.

Source: *Health*, April 2011

♀ Victory! After moms across the country expressed outrage that breast pumps and supplies weren't tax deductible, but items like artificial turf were, on Thursday the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) reversed their decision! Breast pumps are now a tax-deductible expense.

Source: *MomsRising.org*, February 13, 2011