

healthy living

reduces breast
cancer risk

ARTICLE TRACY MARCYNZSYN

“CANCER IS MOST OFTEN A LIFESTYLE DISEASE,” SAYS DR. DARREN CLAIR, MD AND FOUNDER OF VIBRANCE MEDICAL GROUP IN WESTLAKE VILLAGE, NOTING THAT “80% OF BREAST CANCER OCCURS IN WOMEN WITH NO FAMILY HISTORY!” Genetics play a significant role, but only when influenced by lifestyle.

With more than 34 years of experience in anesthesiology and preventive medicine and now board certified in the new specialty of LifeStyle Medicine, Dr. Clair notes that prevention is often the best medicine when it comes to breast cancer, pointing to four key lifestyle factors that can affect a person’s risk of developing breast cancer:

- 01 Adequate exercise
- 02 Healthy diet
- 03 Adequate sleep and stress reduction
- 04 Tobacco and alcohol avoidance.

“Young women who follow these four guidelines can reduce their risk of getting breast cancer by 50%; older women by 80%!” says Dr. Clair, a Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons graduate. “There’s a lot we can do to minimize the risk; so many women are under the false impression that it’s all about genetics, but genetics is really a small part,” he says.

Even when breast cancer is in the family, “you may have a gene that increases your risk if it is expressed, but you also have a number of genes that lower your risk of

breast cancer,” so it’s really about turning on the good genes and turning off the bad genes, he explains.

And gene activation is affected by lifestyle choices.

“The food you eat, the things you expose your body to, the amount of physical activity you get and your stress levels all affect whether genes get turned on or turned off,” says Dr. Clair, who offers a patient-focused approach to help people feel their best at every age.

“Eat your veggies, get enough exercise and sleep, reduce stress and avoid alcohol and tobacco,” he notes. With an emphasis on promoting optimal health rather than treating illness, Dr. Clair takes a whole-person approach to treatment that looks beyond the symptoms. During his more than three decades of practice, he has helped thousands of patients improve and maintain their overall health and vitality.

Dr. Clair says the first step to assisting his patients achieve optimal health is to spend an adequate amount of time with each person to obtain a comprehensive review of their medical history in order to assess their current level of health, lifestyle and to learn of any symptoms they may be experiencing. With the primary objective of finding ways to work with one’s own natural healing ability to develop and maintain ultimate good health, Dr. Clair developed the “Wellness Wheel” to represent many of the various components of optimal health, including heart health, stress management, hormone balancing, weight loss, sleep, nutrition, vitamin deficiency, detox programs and rejuvenation therapies.





By considering all of these factors and focusing on each patient's individual short-term and long-term health goals, Dr. Clair creates a proactive plan to meet their individualized goals.

LIFESTYLE FACTORS

"The same principles that reduce your risk of breast cancer also reduce the risk of heart disease, colon cancer, diabetes and most other health conditions," says Dr. Clair, adding, "More time needs to be spent educating men and women about what they can do to minimize their risk of developing breast cancer in the first place."

EXERCISE

Overweight women have twice the risk of women with healthy body fat percentages of developing breast cancer, says Dr. Clair, citing one French study involving 4 million women: "It doesn't matter how old the woman is, or what type of exercise they do; it's how much they weigh, i.e., how much excess body fat they have" that influences their risk of breast cancer.

A strong inverse relationship exists between exercise and risk. During adolescence, exercise is important for reducing the risk of premenopausal breast cancer, and long-term activity level is important for postmenopausal risk, he explains.

"The more exercise a woman gets, the less likely she is to get breast cancer," he says.

DIET

Eating a plant-based diet with less meat reduces breast cancer risk by lowering exposure to anabolic steroids, heterocyclic amines, fat and pollutants, he notes, pointing to a United Kingdom study which showed more than 14,000 excess cases of breast cancer per year due to a diet deficient in fruits and vegetables *10 years prior*.

Dr. Clair recommends following basic dietary guidelines to reduce breast cancer risk:

- ✦ Eat organically and plant-based, avoiding sugar and processed carbs, alcohol and dairy
- ✦ Eating eggs leads to three times the risk of breast cancer
- ✦ Vegetables, especially cruciferous veggies, are protective, as are onions and mushrooms—eat them daily
- ✦ Eating fruit, namely ORGANIC strawberries block DNA damage and apples especially reduce risk
- ✦ Soy products actually reduce risk and improve survival by binding preferentially to ER β receptors, which are antiproliferative
- ✦ Green tea, turmeric and ground flax seeds are anti-estrogenic; consume them frequently
- ✦ Vitamin D reduces risk of breast, colon and prostate cancer; take at least 2,000 IU daily
- ✦ DHA supplementation of 100 mg is an anti-inflammatory and as such reduces one of the promoters of cancer.

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SLEEP & REDUCING STRESS

The importance of quality sleep should not be overlooked, says Dr. Clair, as melatonin produced during sleep has been shown to reduce breast cancer risk.

Excess chronic stress, which impacts sleep for many, also affects overall health.

"Stress is a huge monster these days," notes Dr. Clair, who recommends taking steps to reduce stress, including journaling, laughing (watch comedies), avoiding negativity and doing yin yoga or other style of relaxing, restorative yoga. Hot yoga or other style of exercise-focused yoga, while helpful as exercise may not reduce stress.

AVOIDING HARMFUL SUBSTANCES

Alcohol is carcinogenic in any dose, notes Dr. Clair, adding that some 5,000 cases of cancer each year are related to consumption of even moderate amounts—even a single drink per day.

Environmental exposure to various risk factors also impact breast cancer risk, Dr. Clair cautions, specifically advising people to avoid the following when possible:

- + Polycyclic aromatic compounds (released by grilling food)
- + Bisphenol A found in plastic bottles, food containers, known as a xenoestrogen
- + Herbicides and pesticides
- + Parabens in haircare products
- + Heavy metals
- + Statins

HORMONES

Properly balanced hormones play a big role in overall health, for example, progesterone turns on a gene that increases apoptosis, or death, of cancer cells, Dr. Clair says.

"So many people are deathly afraid of hormones, but the truth of the matter is, taking natural hormones that your body makes, when properly monitored, is important for optimal function of the heart, brain and body in general," he adds. Given the fact that most people die from cardiovascular disease, and natural hormones can help prevent heart disease and Alzheimer's, it is important to maintain healthy levels of these health-promoting hormones while being watchful regarding cancer.



THE BOTTOM LINE

When it comes to the impact lifestyle factors have on breast cancer risk, "it's typically not just one reason; it's all connected," says Dr. Clair. "You can't ignore any one of those aspects if you really want to be optimally healthy."

Noting that "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure," Dr. Clair is passionate about helping people use their body's own natural curative powers to heal their ailments and stay healthy.

"If 80% of cancer and disease is caused by lifestyle choices, how many billion dollars a year can we save, but more importantly, how much happier and healthier would all Americans be if we just took this to heart and started taking care of ourselves and each other?" he asks.

In recognition of Breast Cancer Awareness month, Dr. Clair will post breast cancer prevention tips on Instagram (@vibrancehealth) every day during the month of October.

Vibrance Medical Group is located at 32123 Lindero Canyon Road, #205, in Westlake Village. Contact them at 805.379.0254 or learn more at VibranceHealth.com.