

## DIET & BREAST CANCER

*“Cancer lies dormant in all of us. Our bodies are making defective cells all the time. That’s how tumors are born. But our bodies are also equipped with a number of mechanisms that detect and keep such cells in check. In the West, 1 in 4 will die of cancer, but **3 in 4** will not. Their defense mechanisms will hold out, and they will die of other causes.*

David Servan Schreiber, MD, PhD

Diet and nutrition play a significant role in preventing the development of abnormal cells into tumors. The body has a natural capacity to heal itself. Here are some of the possible mechanisms:

- Boost its **Immune system**
- Reduce the **Inflammatory process** that underlies the growth of many tumors
- Block the growth of new **blood vessels** that nourish tumors
- Avoid **Carcinogens** whenever possible
- **Lose weight** (if overweight or obese). Abdominal or ‘Belly’ fat is metabolically more active than subcutaneous (under the skin) fat and produces estrogen. This can promote the growth of breast cancer cells. More than 60% of adult Jamaican women are overweight or obese. For women, a waist measurement greater than 35 inches increases our risk.

What we need to do, is reduce our intake of foods which increase our risk, and increase our intake of foods which protect us from breast cancer. Here a few tips:

1. Reduce alcohol intake (It is becoming increasingly popular for women to regularly consume alcoholic beverages. Two or more drinks per day increases the chance of getting breast cancer.)
2. Every effort should be made to make the diet as plant-based and organic as possible. We should note that the wider the variety of colour in our diet the more protective phytonutrients there are.
3. Increase our intake of the cruciferous vegetables - Cabbage; Broccoli; Cauliflower; Brussels sprouts
4. Reduce the intake of animal fats. Recent research suggests that increasing the omega-3 / omega-6 fatty acid ratio is anti-inflammatory and beneficial. Omega-3 rich foods are salmon; mackerel; sardines; tuna; flaxseeds (linseed).

5. It has recently been shown that Vitamin D considerably reduces the risk of several cancers. Good food sources are cod liver oil, and oily fish such as salmon
6. Protective foods include Mushrooms e.g. Shiitake, Maitake, Oyster ; Herbs such as Mint, Thyme, Marjoram, Basil, Rosemary, Oregano; Spices e.g. Turmeric (in curry) and Ginger  
Some good fats e.g. Walnuts and Flaxseed (linseed)

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