

Breast Health Tips for Teens: Early Intervention Strategies in Preventing Breast Cancer

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In Canada one in nine women will be diagnosed with breast cancer at some point in her life and the incidence of the disease is rising each decade. In the 1940s the risk was one in twenty. If we increase our awareness of the causes of this disease and start early with prevention strategies we can help to protect ourselves, our daughters and future generations from breast cancer. Examine the tips below and change what you can each month.

Lifestyle

- Spend an hour a week in the sauna to eliminate chemicals stored in your fat cells. Before you have children consider a 150 hour sauna detox program to eliminate your body burden of environmental chemicals; many of these mimic the hormone estrogen.
- Exercise at least 40 minutes each day.
- Spend time outside each day, to receive sunlight to increase vitamin D levels.
- Sleep in a dark room, and keep electrical devices at least 3 feet from your bed. Use a night light in the washroom, and avoid turning on a bright light at night to keep melatonin levels high.
- Meditate, or do slow long deep breathing exercises for at least 11 minutes before bed to increase melatonin levels.
- Take regular relaxation breaks every 2-3 hours throughout the day for about 20 minutes to alleviate stress.
- Switch to using non-toxic cleaning products, like baking soda and vinegar.
- Read labels on cosmetics, avoiding phthalates and parabens (which act like estrogen) in sunscreens, perfumes, lotions, shampoos, conditioners, toothpaste, nail polish, hairspray, hair styling gels, shaving gels, deodorants and lotions etc. Choose essential oils instead of chemical perfume or use none at all.
- Clean your drinking water with a solid-carbon-block water filter, which removes chlorine and pesticides.
- If your water supply is highly chlorinated, consider a charcoal filter for your showerhead.
- Drink water stored in glass rather than plastic. The plastic often leaches chemicals {bisphenol A (# 7) or phthalates} that act like the hormone estrogen. Avoid any containers with #3 (polyvinyl chloride, or PVC) and #6 (polystyrene). If you use any plastic containers rather than glass ones (as for freezing), choose those that contain polyethylene (# 1, 2, and 4) and polypropylene (# 5), as their composition is less toxic.
- Store acidic foods or drinks in glass or metal. Acidic substances help chemicals leach from plastic.
- Avoid products made from polystyrene, or Styrofoam, a suspected carcinogen used in cups and containers.
- Maintain an appropriate weight. Seek help to lose weight if required.
- Seek a dentist who will use porcelain fillings in your teeth. Avoid mercury amalgam fillings and plastic fillings. Look into fillings using bile acids. Avoid root canals and remove infected root canal teeth.
- Do not use the birth control pill, but consider barrier methods such as condoms.
- Choose clothing made from natural, untreated materials. Avoid flame-retardant clothing, which has been treated with polybrominated diphenyl ethers, or PBDEs, which are estrogenic and disrupt thyroid function.
- Use dry cleaning services that do not use perchloroethylene (PERC) or request "wet cleaning." PERC has been linked to breast cancers.



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- Wear a looser cotton bra rather than an underwire bra. Avoid tight bras or don't wear one.

Dietary

- Use 45 grams of fibre each day to ensure at least 2 or 3 bowel movements a day – add 2 tbsp. bran to your breakfast cereal, eat 1-2 cups legumes daily, use more whole grains, less bread.
- Add 2 tbsp. of freshly ground flaxseeds daily to your cereal, juice or fruit smoothie, salad or beans. (Use an electric coffee grinder to grind them).
- Use 8-10 servings of fruits and vegetables daily.
- Eat some raw broccoli, cauliflower or cabbage daily.
- Eat organic food whenever possible. The fruits and vegetables with the highest pesticide load are peaches, apples, sweet bell peppers, celery, nectarines, grapes and strawberries, while those with the lowest pesticide load include onions, avocados, frozen corn, pineapples, mangoes, and frozen peas. If you have a limited budget, spend your money on organic fruits and vegetables that would otherwise carry the highest pesticide load. Peel fruits and vegetables that are not organic.
- Decrease or avoid meat consumption, replacing it with legumes and organic soy.
- When barbecuing or grilling foods, minimize char by reducing the heat and by using marinades. Char contains polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, which are known to cause breast tumours in animals.
- Decrease or avoid dairy consumption, replacing it with organic soy products, or almond milk.
- Minimize fish consumption unless you know it is free of chemicals and heavy metals.
- If you do eat meat or fish, discard the fat and skin – these are where pollutants concentrate.
- Use extra virgin olive oil for cooking. If you are frying, use a little water first, before adding the olive oil. Minimize other oils and fats except flaxseed oil and fish oil.
- Use cold-pressed flaxseed oil (Flora) on your food after it is cooked. Keep flaxseed oil in the fridge and use it up within 6 weeks. Never heat it.
- Minimize sugar, sweets, pastries and desserts, using fresh fruit instead.
- Spice your food with turmeric regularly.
- Use onions and garlic with gusto.
- Use 2 tbsp of seaweed daily (nori sheet, dulse powder, mekabu) or use a kelp tablet daily.
- Store your food in glass or stainless steel, rather than plastic.
- Use pots and pans that are steel clad, enameled or cast iron, avoiding aluminum and nonstick coatings. Avoid perfluorooctanoic acid, or PFOA, a chemical used in Teflon™ (as well as Gortex,™ Scotchguard™) which has been linked to cancer and birth defects in animals.
- Avoid canned food when the cans are lined with clear or white plastic – this is bisphenol-A, which acts like estrogen and stimulates breast cells to divide.

Supplements

- Use a multivitamin daily that contains 100-200 mcg. of selenium and at least 30 mg. of zinc
- Supplement with calcium citrate, magnesium citrate and vitamin D daily, with about 1000 mg of calcium, 600 mg magnesium and at least 3000 IU of vitamin D3.
- Use 2000 mg or more of vitamin C daily. This will help prevent the accumulation of toxic metals, and improve immunity.
- Supplement with 2000 mg. of a good quality fish oil supplement.
- If you are unable to eat 8 servings of fruits and vegetables daily, use 1 tbsp. daily of a green powdered supplement, rich in carotenes and protective plant nutrients.



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- If you have a family history or higher risk of breast cancer, use 100 mg Coenzyme Q10, 300 mg Indole-3-carbinol, 1500 mg curcumin, 1000 mg N-acetyl cysteine and 300 mg alpha lipoic acid daily.

Environmental

- Discontinue pesticide use on lawns and gardens and encourage your neighbours to do the same. Seal holes through which pests enter your home and control them by using borax or sticky traps that do not contain pesticides. Use mint and lavender to ward off mice and sprinkle red chili powder, paprika, dried peppermint, peppermint essential oil, powdered soap, or borax where ants enter your home. See www.beyondpesticides.org for non-toxic alternatives to pesticides.
- Avoid commercial fabric softeners, which contain harmful chemicals and fragrances. Make your own fabric softener using baking soda or white vinegar.
- Minimize/avoid use of chlorine bleach. Chlorinated hot water can release chloroform, a carcinogen. To whiten clothes naturally, rinse them in lemon juice and let them dry in the sunlight.
- Encourage local pools to switch from chlorine or bromine to saltwater or ozonation.
- Avoid use of mothballs, which contain naphthalene or paradichlorobenzene - both chemicals are carcinogens. Use instead cedar products or lavender sachets.
- Do not use toilet bowl deodorizers that contain paradichlorobenzene. Use instead lemon juice, borax, baking soda, vitamin C crystals and/or white vinegar.
- Choose home furnishings such as carpets, carpet pads, bedding, cushions, and furniture made from natural fibers such as wood, cotton, wool or hemp, avoiding commercial products with foam, PBDEs, or fire retardants. Decline Scotchguard™ and stain-resistant treatment of furnishings and fabrics. Avoid furniture made from pressed wood or particleboard, which releases the carcinogen formaldehyde.
- Avoid phthalates, used to make plastic soft and more flexible, in your household furnishings. These are found in polyvinyl flooring, vinyl window frames and siding, vinyl blow-up furniture, wallpaper and shower curtains. Choose instead untreated cotton, silk or nylon curtains and curtain liners, wood or stone flooring, and non-toxic paint (low or no VOCs) for walls.
- Avoid artificial air fresheners and other scented products, which contain phthalates. Use fresh flowers or herbal potpourris instead. Choose beeswax candles, which emit fewer toxins than paraffin candles.
- Avoid and/or remove carpeting, where contaminants such as fire retardants and pesticides accumulate. Use natural fiber area rugs instead that you can take outside to air and clean.
- Avoid tracking pollutants into your home. Place a doormat on the outside of each entrance to your home and a rug on the inside of each entryway. Remove outdoor shoes upon entry.
- Avoid the PBDE known as Deca, used in computer and television monitors, mobile phones, fax machines, remote controls, video equipment, printers, photocopiers, toner cartridges, scanners; electronic components, plastics and fabrics in cars; kitchen appliances, fans, heaters or hair dryers, curtains, water heaters, and lamp sockets. The manufacturers that have committed to eliminating Deca and all brominated fire retardants from their products include: Acer, Apple, Eizo Nanao, LG Electronics, Lenovo, Matsushita, Microsoft, Nokia, Phillips, Samsung, Sharp, Sony-Ericsson, and Toshiba.
- Use fewer electrical devices so we rely less on nuclear power. Conserve energy.
- Assess your home and work environments with both a Gauss meter and a Stetzer meter to measure and decrease exposure to electromagnetic fields. Purchase Graham-Stetzer filters to decrease dirty power if needed.



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- Avoid products containing PVC (polyvinyl chloride), such as raincoats, shower curtains, vinyl furniture and encourage the phasing out of PVC.
- Use alternatives to plastic (metal, paper, cardboard, wood).
- Take cloth bags or bins shopping to avoid using plastic bags.
- Find out who the polluters are in your area by logging on to www.pollutionwatch.org (Canada) or www.scorecard.org (U.S.) and write letters or lobby to decrease local pollutants.
- Host an environmental film festival each year to educate yourselves and others.
- Celebrate Rachel Carson Day, May 27 each year by doing what you can to protect the environment on that day. Clean up your little corner of the earth.

Psychological

- Find ways to express your anger constructively and let it go. If you have a backlog of anger, seek counseling.
- Invest your energy in activities, hobbies, volunteer work or causes you feel excited about that develop your skills and abilities.
- Learn to define your needs and develop assertiveness.
- Connect with groups of like-minded individuals throughout your life who support and validate you.
- Find a spiritual practice that connects you to others and to the universal energy or God and use that practice or worship to strengthen faith, hope and love.
- Resolve conflict as it occurs, rather than holding it inside you, or let it go.