Reducing the Risk of Breast Cancer Through Lifestyle

Move Every Day
- Inactivity increases the risk of breast cancer and of breast cancer returning. It is important to be active every day.
- Move any way you can, as often as you can. Every bit counts!
- Aim for a total of at least 30 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity most days. Moderate exercise can be as simple as, walking. Any form of exercise is good exercise!

Environmental Factors
To date, there has been no convincing evidence to link breast cancer with environmental factors, for example, pesticides, industrial chemicals, growth hormones and antibiotics in animal farming.

Alcohol & Tobacco Smoking
- Drinking alcohol increases the risk of breast cancer and of breast cancer returning
- It is best not to have any alcohol. If you do drink, any decrease in the amount will help to lower the risk.
- A drink is 12 ounces (350ml) of beer, 5 ounces (150ml) of wine, or 1 ½ ounces (45ml) of liquor.
- Smoking tobacco increases the risk of breast cancer. The earlier it is started the higher the risk.
- Smoking cessation programs are listed at www.sharedhealthmb.ca/bhc - click on Breast Cancer, click on Reduce Your Risk and then Smoking and Tobacco.

The key to reducing the risk of breast cancer, is linked to the whole diet not ‘super foods’ or supplements. Enjoy a life fueled by a healthy diet and powered by regular physical activity.

It is all about . . .
- Variety
- Balance
- Moderation
Research has shown there is a link between diet, physical activity and breast cancer. The following guidelines include what we know to date.

Eat Well
Choosing a healthy diet helps the body work as well as it can. It provides the energy needed to be physically active and to feel strong.

Experts agree healthy eating includes:

- Variety.
- Lots of fruits and vegetables.
- Whole grain products (bread, pasta, rice, breakfast cereal, other grains).
- Lean meat, poultry, fish, wild game.
- Legumes (dried beans peas and lentils) at least once a week
- Foods containing calcium for bone health.
- Less processed foods.

Reducing Total Fat
Many studies have been done to determine if a low-fat diet, or restricting a certain type of fat, decreases the risk of breast cancer and/or breast cancer returning.

There is no clear answer yet. It is important to choose a diet that includes healthy, unsaturated fats (most oils, nuts, seeds and fish) and one that limits saturated fat (fatty meats and full-fat dairy products; coconut and palm fat including oil).

What about Plant Estrogens?

- Plant estrogen is the form of estrogen that is found in some foods. By far, the highest amounts are found in soy and flaxseed. Much smaller amounts are also found in nuts, legumes, cereals and breads.
- Many breast cancers are fed by estrogen. This has caused a lot of confusion about the safety of having these foods. Plant estrogens in food do not act the same way as human estrogen acts in our bodies. Human studies have been done and experts agree that it is safe to have foods high in plant estrogens.

Aim for a Healthy Weight
Eating well can help keep weight as healthy as possible and provide energy to be physically active.

- Fill up on healthy foods and reduce how much unhealthy food is eaten.
- Make every bite count toward being healthy. Be patient and work on improving, not on perfection.
- Balance the amount of food eaten with regular physical activity.

If you have had breast cancer, enjoy these foods in moderation. To learn more, go to www.sharedhealthmb.ca/bhc, under Services, click on the Nutrition Services tab or call the dietitian at the Breast Health Centre.