



Huntington
Hospital

Huntington for Her

Weight loss can decrease a woman's breast cancer risk.

Being overweight or obese places a woman at increased risk of breast cancer, and those that have been diagnosed with breast cancer can have a worse prognosis if they are overweight. Before menopause, the ovaries make the majority of your estrogen, and the fatty tissue in our bodies make very little. However, after menopause when the ovaries no longer make estrogen, it comes from the fat tissue and is released into circulation. Therefore, having more fat tissue after menopause will increase estrogen levels. In addition, overweight women have higher blood insulin levels as well as insulin-like growth factors that can also stimulate breast cancer cells to grow.

Studies suggest that when a patient does lose weight, this can lower her risk of breast cancer. Exercise is extremely important to keep your weight down and has been shown to reduce the risk of breast cancer by as much as 40% in some studies. But even low-level physical activity such as walking can reduce your risk of breast cancer by approximately 20%. Therefore, the American Cancer Society recommends that adults get at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity or 75 minutes of vigorous intensity exercise every week (or a combination of these two).

Studies have also shown that patients who have been diagnosed with breast cancer have a worse prognosis if they are overweight or obese. It is



very important after the diagnosis of breast cancer to exercise regularly and keep your weight down. If you are overweight or obese at the time of your diagnosis, measures should be taken to try to lose weight. This can be challenging, because antiestrogen medication such as Tamoxifen can sometimes have the side effect of weight gain.

At Huntington Cancer Center, we have developed programs to assist patients with losing the weight. Our patients meet regularly with an oncology certified dietitian, and we have exercise classes and cancer-specific exercise programs for our patients. We are also offering the BWEL trial (breast cancer weight loss study). This is a trial of weight loss intervention in obese and overweight women with early stage breast cancer that should give us some insight into how much weight loss can improve survival in our breast cancer patients.

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