

## The new Holy Grail for preventing breast cancer lies in diet

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There has long been the suspicion of a relationship between what we eat and breast cancer.

This originated from experiments conducted on rats in the early 1940s, and observations in human populations later reinforced this notion.

These studies showed strong association with fat intake and breast cancer increase in migrant populations with changing dietary habits after they immigrated to the United States and developed a Western style diet.

Breast cancer develops in multiple steps. It appears to be affected by multiple genetic, dietary and exercise factors starting in utero and continuing postnatal through adolescence, pregnancy and menopause.

Many important risk factors are related to the first two decades of life that alter the profiles of gene expression during development of the breast. Exposure to atomic bomb radiation in Japan increased the incidence of breast cancer for women of all ages, but the largest increase was observed among women exposed during teenage years, when breasts develop most rapidly.

A recent secondary analysis of the NIH-AARP Diet and Health Study published in 2007, which included 188,736 post menopausal women, states that reducing fat intake reduces the risk of breast cancer along with other known risk-reducing factors such as weight loss and avoiding hormone replacement therapy.

With more sophisticated tools that have come about because of the Genome Project, more studies have been evaluating inherited risk factors such as the BRAC 1 and 2 and their association with foods.

A recent study by Lee and Colleagues in 2008 looking at post-menopausal women with genetic risks and high consumption of yellow and green vegetables known to contain high quantities of isothiocyanates was associated with significant reduction in breast cancer.

Until we have more data it seems to be a reasonable recommendation to eat more veggies and reduce your fat intake. When buying groceries, look for hormone-free, organically grown food and free-range meat.

In Asheville and the surrounding area we have an abundance of choices at farmer's markets and natural food stores. To live long, eat healthy, exercise daily, be nice to your family and share with your neighbors.

This is the opinion of Dr. Nathan E. Williams, a member of the WNC/Buncombe County Medical Society who works with Hope Women's Cancer Centers and The Breast Center at Hope.

Dr. Nathan Williams

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