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Breast Cancer
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Congratulations to everyone who helped kick-off "National Breast Cancer Awareness Month" by participating on Sunday, October 6th in "Run for the Cure". Finding a cure for breast cancer is a team effort and cannot be done without the funding for research.

Information is a powerful tool. It can help us make choices that affect our health. Understanding your individual risk factors for the following three diseases can influence very personal decisions on diet, medication, exercise, whether you smoke or drink, how you manage your social life. A keen awareness of preventive measures can help you feel a measure of control. The only thing that won't help is pretending that it can't happen to you. Here is what you need to know.

Breast Cancer

Risk Factors:

Family history

Early menstruation

No children or first childbirth after 30

Obesity

A high-fat, low-fiber diet

Possibly the use of birth control pills or estrogen

Prevention tips:

Exercise - Studies show that regular exercise has reduced the risk breast cancer in women 40 and younger and plays a significant part in protecting postmenopausal women because it helps reduce fat levels, which in turn reduces breast cancer risk.

Monthly self-examination - Two exams should be done, one standing up and one lying down. Using your fingertips, press and feel around the outer edges of your breast and circle in toward the center. Imagine that you have healing power in your hands - which you do and trust your inner voice.

Annual mammogram - Annual mammograms are recommended for women over 40. Women with a family history of premenopausal breast cancer should begin at 35.

Osteoporosis

Risk factors:

A thin or small-boned frame
Cigarette smoking
Excessive use of alcohol
A diet low in calcium
Little or no weight-bearing exercise
Use of prednisone or cortisone
Ovaries removed at early age
Anorexia nervosa
Low estrogen level

Prevention tips:

Weight training - In a recent study at Tufts University, William Evans, Ph.D., looked at the bone density in women 10 years past menopause, comparing those who were sedentary with those who exercised regularly with weights. Neither group used estrogen replacement. At the end of one year, "women who did the weight-training program were twice as strong, had greater balance and more muscle mass," says Evans. In their lower backs, bone density actually had increased.

Dietary calcium - Calcium is found in dairy products such as milk, cheese and yogurt and in green, leafy vegetables. Although calcium is important, the efficacy of high-dose calcium is questionable. Says Evans: "If calcium intake is inadequate, yes, you might have a problem. But it is not clear that doubling the normal amount of calcium doubles the strength of your bones."

Avoid prolonged use of medications that can deplete calcium - Examples are antacids and anticonvulsants. The National Osteoporosis Foundation offers a booklet listing all medications that may have this effect on Calcium.

Heart Disease

Risk factors:

Getting older, menopause
Family history
Smoking cigarettes, especially if taking oral contraceptives
High blood pressure
High blood cholesterol
Lack of physical activity
High triglycerides
Diabetes
Obesity
Feelings of tension, loneliness and an inability to relax
Excessive alcohol use

Preventions tips:

Diet low in fat (especially saturated and trans fats) and cholesterol. Cholesterol is found in animal and dairy products. While cholesterol counting is important, the greatest

culprit in raising LDL ("bad") blood-cholesterol level is the saturated fat found in animal fat, coconut, palm and palm kernel oils and trans fats, found in processed bake goods and margarines.

Stress reduction - Take active steps to gain a sense of peace and fulfillment.

Exercise regularly - Aerobic exercise is best for strengthening the heart.

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