

News you can use

What experts have to say



Cases of breast cancer are on the rise all over the world. More so in a developing country like India. To prevent the disease it is important to mitigate the risk factors that may lead to breast cancer. A few basic guidelines can help

The incidence of breast cancer in India is on the rise. It is fast becoming the number one cancer in women pushing the cervical cancer to the second spot. It is reported that one in 22 women in India is likely to suffer from breast cancer during her lifetime. Recently a breast cancer programme was organised in the Capital where experts talked about ideal diet, exercise, etc for patients.

What is the ideal diet for breast cancer patients?

Preeti Vijay, HOD Dietician, Max Healthcare:

Adequate intake of calories, protein and micronutrients can improve nutritional status for most patients. The nutritional principles outlined by the American Cancer Society's guidelines on diet, nutrition and cancer prevention should be used for the basis of a healthy diet including those who are well nourished, during as well as after treatment. Eat several small meals instead of three regular meals. Stock up on a variety of foods. Try different settings when eating — the dining room, kitchen, with background music, watching television — anything that makes eating more appealing. Each person's diet should be modified to fit her personal needs.

What role does the diet play in the wellbeing of the patient?

Preeti Vijay: Diet plays a very important role in the wellbeing and recovery of the patient. Healthy diet is essential to correct existing nutritional deficiencies or to promote nutritional status. During the treatment patient suffers from different problems like anorexia,

constipation, taste changes, mouth dryness, etc. Because of this the patients are unable to have food as a normal person and they require variety in the food.

What are some of the foods that the patients avoid?

Preeti Vijay: In take of meat, cream, cheese, vanaspati etc. Avoiding deep fried, char grilled and burnt foods, high fat snacks, high salt and sugar, avoid smoking and passive smoking.

Avoiding smoked and cured foods — contain nitrosamines which are carcinogenic. Read labels of all packaged meats. Alcohol too should be avoided.

What are some of the exercises recommended?

Dr Alakananada Banerjee; Head — Phsyiotherapy & Rehabilitation: Exercises which are prescribed to a patient who had undergone a surgery for breast cancer are mainly focused to maintain and improve shoulder joint mobility and improve circulation in the arm and prevent any swelling or oedema. Postural correction exercises are also demonstrated to the patients. Some of the exercises are: Shoulder exercises, shoulder flexion, shoulder rotation, shoulder abduction, wand exercises, pulley exercises, ball squeezing exercises. Then there are neck movement exercises: Forward and backward bending, side flexion and rotation.

Can these exercises be done by all breast cancer patients? Or do they need to consult their individual treating doctors?

Dr Banerjee: These exercises can be done by all patients who have undergone cancer removal surgery though, it is important to consult your doctor before starting with any of the exercises.

What are some of the other considerations/precautions that need to be taken care of?

Dr Geeta K, Senior Consultant — Surgical Oncology: There is no method of preventing breast cancer but being self aware and enrolling into a screening programme is helpful. It is certainly advisable to be aware of your breast by performing regular breast self examination.

The technique can be taught to you by a breast specialist and then you can perform it every month one week after your periods. Screening helps in picking up very early lesions. There is no method of preventing breast cancer but being self aware and enrolling into a screening programme (if you have a significant family history or if you are over the age of 50) is helpful.

It is certainly advisable to be aware of your breast by performing regular breast self examination. The technique can be taught to you by a breast specialist and then you can perform it every month one week after your periods. If you are post menopausal you can fix a date every month which coincides with your birth date or marriage anniversary etc.

The whole idea of being breast aware is to be able to pick up an abnormality at the earliest and it goes without saying that an early diagnosis improves the chances of cure. Screening helps in picking up very early lesions, even those that are not felt on examination and that is the best possible situation to be in if it is indeed cancer.

However, mammograms are also known to miss cancer in about 20 per cent cases. All the information that has been collected with imaging should be rationalised in collaboration with the clinician.