

Press Release



For immediate release

29 September 2011

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British Dietetic Association Supports Breast Cancer Awareness Month: October 2011

Breast cancer is the most common cancer in the UK with the highest risk being in women over the age of 50. There are currently around 47 000 women diagnosed with breast cancer every year, and you may not realise that around 341 men are also diagnosed per year¹.

Dietary and lifestyle factors such as increased rates of obesity, high alcohol intake, high fat and low fibre diets have all been blamed for the observed increased rates of breast cancer, however a clear link has not been found.

The exciting new field of nutrigenomics is a science that combines genetics and nutrition. It is the study of how food or bioactive food molecules affect our genes. It is suggested that consuming foods that have a nutrigenomic effect will lead to certain genes being switched on or off.

Mariëtte Abrahams, registered dietitian and spokesperson for BDA's Freelance Dietitians group said:

“With a strong trend and demand for prevention and self-care, we are on the brink of a new era. In the future, we may be able to provide more personalised dietary advice to individuals who have inherited gene variants that increase their risk of developing breast cancer.

“Previous studies have indicated that women carrying specific genetic variants of the breast cancer gene may be more responsive to the cancer-reducing effects of catechins in green tea² and genistein in soya³, but there is still a lot of work that needs to be done”.

Dietitians play a crucial role in promoting a healthy diet and lifestyle and can advise on food choices before, during and after a diagnosis has been made. Visit the Freelance Dietitians website on www.freelancedietitians.org to find a registered dietitian near you for dietary consultation and tailored advice or contact your GP.

Early diagnosis is critical and taking preventative measures by adopting a healthy diet and lifestyle is certainly a step in the right direction of lowering your risk.

Tips for reducing risk of developing breast cancer include:

Maintain a healthy weight

Choose healthy foods, meals and snacks such as wholegrains, fruit, low-fat dairy products and nuts. Stay active and engage in regular exercise. A healthy body mass index (BMI) ranges between 18.5-25 for women. Although it is not the sole indicator of a healthy body, it is useful as an indicator of body status. Your BMI is calculated using your weight in kilograms (kg) and height in metres (m), with the formula $BMI = \text{weight}/\text{height}^2$

Eat plenty of plant- based foods such as fruits and vegetables

The intake of fibre (lignins) from fruits and vegetables and isoflavones (from soya, beans and legumes) have been linked to a lowered risk for developing breast cancer. Aim for at least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables per day. For practical ways to increase your fruit and vegetable intake, visit the British Dietetic Association website for more information.

Reduce saturated fat intake

Replacing saturated fats (from animal products) with poly- and monounsaturated fats such as those found in olive oil, nuts and avocados.

Salt and sugar

Reduce salt intake by avoiding processed food as well as cured and pickled foods. In addition, avoid using extra salt at the table. Avoid eating refined sugars such as those found in biscuits, cakes and pastries.

Limit alcohol intake

Knowing your limit is important. A high alcohol consumption has been linked with increased risk of breast cancer. Therefore, limit your intake to 2-3 units per day or a maximum of 14 units per week and have some alcohol free days. One unit of alcohol is equal to ½ a standard glass of wine (175ml).

For information on what is happening around the UK regarding Breast Cancer Awareness Month visit www.breastcancercare.org

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**For more information / interview requests, please contact the BDA Press Office on
0870 850 2517**

Notes to the Editor:

- Visit the Freelance Dietitians website at www.freelancedietitians.org
- Visit the BDA website at www.bda.uk.com
- The Freelance Dietitian's site has a list of experienced registered dietitians who provide expert dietary guidance to individuals privately and offer a wide range of nutrition services to organisations such as food companies, schools, care homes, workplaces, PCTs and health departments. Freelance Dietitians is a specialist group of The [British Dietetic Association](http://www.bda.uk.com).
- The British Dietetic Association, founded in 1936, is the professional association for registered dietitians in Great Britain and Northern Ireland. It is the nation's largest organisation of food and nutrition professionals with over 6,000 members.
- Registered dietitians are the only qualified health professionals that assess, diagnose and treat diet and nutrition problems at an individual and wider public health level. Uniquely, dietitians use the most up to date public health and scientific research on food, health and disease, which they translate into practical guidance to enable people to make appropriate lifestyle and food choices.
- Dietitians are the only nutrition professionals to be statutorily regulated, and governed by an ethical code, to ensure that they always work to the highest standard. Dietitians work in the NHS, private practice, industry, education, research, sport, media, public relations, publishing, non-government organisations and government. Their advice influences food and health policy across the spectrum from government, local communities and individuals.

References

1. Cancer Research UK
2. Anna H. Wu, Chiu-Chen Tseng, David Van Den Berg Tea Intake, *COMT* Genotype, and Breast Cancer in Asian-American women. *Cancer Res* 2003;63:7526-7529
3. Steiner C, Arnould S, Scalbert A, Manach C. Isoflavones and the prevention of breast and prostate cancer: new perspectives opened by nutrigenomics. *Br Jn Nutrition* (2008) 99 E-supp 1 ES78-ES108