

# Breast Cancer Wellness

Empowering MIND - BODY -  
SPIRIT

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## The important role of diet in reducing the risk of a breast cancer recurrence

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We've treated many breast cancer patients since establishing the Block Center for Integrative Cancer Treatment in 1980. Our experience is that patients who adhere to their integrative program once they are in remission tend to have low recurrence rates. A low fat diet is an integral part of our dietary strategy. Therefore, it is reassuring to see the growing body of research demonstrating that a diet low in fat reduces breast cancer recurrence. To date, 11 out of 14 studies show a significant relationship between low total fat or low saturated fat, and breast cancer survival, recurrence, or both. In addition, others have shown inverse associations between breast cancer survival and either blood cholesterol or adipose tissue levels of saturated fat. This tally of studies suggests a strong relationship between low dietary fat intake and improved disease-free survival, or total survival rates from breast cancer, particularly in postmenopausal women. The recent Women's Intervention Nutrition Study (WINS) looked at 2437 postmenopausal breast cancer patients. The treatment group, which was placed on a 20% fat diet, had an impressive 24% fewer recurrences!

This information is equally relevant while patients are undergoing treatment. We know that patients undergoing breast cancer treatment who gain weight have a worse prognosis. Therefore, our regimen has always suggested a diet comprised of 15-18% fat, individualized to body composition. We also assess and monitor blood sugar and insulin levels of our patients and optimize them with diet, exercise, supplementation and mind-spirit strategies. Existing research demonstrates breast cancer patients with higher levels of insulin have *twice the risk of recurrence and three times the risk of death*.

We believe that careful, long term monitoring is necessary to individualize therapeutic interventions for each patient. There are dietary strategies, however, that are appropriate for all of our patients. These include:

- Eat a diet lower in fat, ideally no more than 18% of your daily caloric intake. Use "good" fats -- monounsaturated and omega-3 fats -- from olive oil, flax seed oil, almond oil and canola oil, as well as fats from deep-sea fish.
- Eat cruciferous vegetables, such as broccoli, bok choy, and brussel sprouts – which contain plant phytochemicals that lower blood estrogen levels by increasing the estrogen detoxification capacity of the liver.
- Eat a diet high in fiber, with plant-based sources of protein. Fiber from whole grains, vegetables, fruit, and beans can reduce harmful circulating estrogen levels.