**Reducing Your Risk of Breast Cancer by Focusing on Hormone Balance**

**By Dr. Ramona Warren**

Breast cancer is the second leading cause of death in women, affecting nearly 230,000 women annually. However, many people are surprised to learn that breast cancer can also affect men. Nearly 2,000 men are diagnosed with breast cancer annually. With the incidence of breast cancer at an all-time high, researchers are searching for common links and causes. Estrogen dominance has been shown to be one such link. In fact, many studies show an imbalance of this hormone directly related to 95% of breast cancer cases.

Estrogen dominance occurs when there is too much estrogen in the body in relation to progesterone. Low progesterone levels can develop due to stress, diet and inactivity. Estrogen levels can increase for a variety of reasons. Being overweight can contribute to estrogen dominance, because over time, fat cells will begin to produce estrogen in the body. This is one of the reasons it is common to see men with enlarged breasts. As men develop their “pot belly” and gain weight, the fat becomes an “estrogen factory” and the man’s level of estrogen will rise. The same holds true for women and children that carry additional weight.

Other causes of estrogen dominance include synthetic Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT), birth control pills and exposure to xenoestrogens. Xenoestrogens are compounds that act like estrogen in the body and can be found in plastics, canned foods, food additives, pesticides, household cleaning products and hormones found in commercially-raised meats.

Symptoms of estrogen dominance include:

* Headaches
* Fatigue
* Insomnia
* Hot flashes
* Weight gain
* Sweet cravings
* Menstrual problems
* Osteoporosis
* Mood swings
* Memory loss
* Anxiety
* Depression
* Cancer

The good news is we have more control over our risk for cancer than we might realize. There are many things we can do to help restore proper hormone balance, which can reduce the risk of breast cancer, as well as many other degenerative diseases.

Here are five simple steps you can follow now:

1. **Keep your levels of Vitamin D in the optimal range.** Vitamin D is more than just a vitamin. It converts into an important hormone that affects nearly every cell in the body. Research has shown Vitamin D to be critical for a healthy immune system and powerful protection against most cancers. One study showed that Vitamin D injected into human breast cancer cells caused over 50 percent of the cancer cells to die in a period of days! Make sure to have your doctor check your vitamin D3 levels the next time you get blood work. Optimal ranges of Vitamin D should be between 45 and 95 ng/ml.
2. **Eat a plant-based diet.** Focusing on vegetables, moderate amounts of fruit and using meat as a side dish (rather than the emphasis of the meal) provides vitamins, minerals and fiber that help keep hormones in balance. Eat organic as much as possible, making sure to choose foods raised without harmful chemicals, antibiotics or hormones. Avoid foods made with refined flours, hydrogenated fats, preservatives and artificial ingredients.
3. **Avoid Sugar.** Not only does sugar cause inflammation in the body and leads to osteoporosis, multiple studies have shown that sugar increases cancer risk. Sugar feeds cancer cells. Having a higher blood sugar level has been linked to cancers of the pancreas, skin, uterus and breast. Women who consumed a high-carbohydrate diet were over twice as likely to develop breast cancer as women who ate a lower carbohydrate diet. When you eat a plant-based diet, you naturally will be eating a lower carb diet. Read labels and watch for how many grams of sugar the food contains. Four grams of sugar is equal one teaspoon. The average American adult consumes 22 teaspoons of sugar a day and the average teen consumes 34 teaspoons a day. It is probably hard to imagine sitting down at a sugar bowl and eating 22 spoonfuls of sugar a day, but that is exactly what Americans are doing by eating fast and processed foods, which are loaded with sugars, many of them in hidden forms.
4. **Exercise Regularly.** Exercise helps improve your overall health, but more studies are also showing that exercise reduces the risk and recurrence of breast cancer. Doing both aerobic and resistance exercise an average of 30 minutes a day has shown to be most beneficial in lowering breast cancer risk.
5. **Manage your stress.** Stress weakens our immune system and increases our risk of cancer. Some simple things to manage stress include focusing on five things you are grateful for when first waking in the morning and before going to bed at night. Deep breathing has also been shown to be a great stress reliever. Combine positive thoughts with deep breathing exercise for an even more powerful impact.