



## Lady of America Newsletter - October 2009

### Eating: Food and Cancer

A new study suggests that women with early-stage breast cancer may live longer if they maintain a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains and low-fat dairy.

This “prudent” diet, as described by researchers, was not linked to a lower risk of death from breast cancer specifically. However, breast cancer patients who ate this way were less likely to die from other causes over the eight-year study period, according to what the researchers found.

“Consumption of a diet high in fruits, vegetables, whole grains and poultry, and low in red meat and refined foods may positively influence a woman’s overall health and prevent other cancers and chronic diseases,” said Dr. Marilyn L. Kwan, a researcher at Kaiser Permanente in Oakland, CA.

The results are consistent with past studies suggesting that diet may be more important in general health and diseases other than breast cancer than it is in breast cancer survival specifically, according to Kwan and her colleagues.

The findings, published in the *Journal of Clinical Oncology*, are based on 1,901 women diagnosed with early-stage breast cancer. Between 2000 and 2002, the women completed a detailed questionnaire on their diet, exercise habits, weight and other health factors.

They were then followed for up to eight years. During that time, 226 women died, with 128 deaths attributed to breast cancer.

Kwan’s team found that women who reported a prudent dietary pattern at the outset had a lower death rate overall than those who reported a more “Western” style diet.

Women with the highest intake of healthier foods were half as likely to die during the study period as women with the lowest intake, even with other factors considered – initial size of the breast tumor, treatment types and smoking habits. Contrary, women with Western eating habits had a 53% higher risk of death.



Neither dietary plan, however, was related to the odds of breast cancer recurrence or to woman's risk of dying from the disease. Still, the link between diet and overall survival means that eating healthy is "very much an important factor for breast cancer survivors," Kwan said.

"Women living with breast cancer still want to know how they can improve their overall chances of surviving," she noted, "and as our study shows, eating a more healthful diet is beneficial for overall survival."

## Trick or Treat... I Want Something Good to Eat!

It's that time of year when the ghosts and goblins come out to play tricks and seek treats. With some planning and commitment, you can get through the evening without devouring an entire bag of candy or feeling deprived.



Remember, Halloween is just another day, and one night. Keep to your usual routine in exercise and nutrition. Make sure to eat small nutritious meals every two to three hours to help keep cravings at bay. At work, keep health snacks in your desk drawer for those times when temptation calls. Great choices include baked pumpkin seeds, walnuts/almonds, fruit, protein bars, whole-grain pretzels, sugar-free puddings, 94% fat-free microwave popcorn and 100-calorie pack treats.

With these simple tips, you should be able to make it through the Halloween season, which tends to last about 5 days.

1. Take the temptation out of indulging by buying at the last minute; and buy candy you don't like.
2. Think small. The smaller, the better – look for candy labeled "fun size," "mini" and "100-calorie packs."
3. Go for the dark stuff instead of the milk chocolate. At least if you dip into the candy, you'll benefit from chocolate's *flavonoids*, which have powerful antioxidant effects.
4. Hand out lollipops, hard candy and sugar-free gum.
5. Snack-size pretzels, raisins, dried fruit and Chex-mix make great school snacks and a healthier snack for you. Look for individual prepackaged options.
6. Skip the candy and give stickers, rub-on tattoos, bubbles, paddle balls, puzzles, pencils/erasers and other toys. There are plenty of Halloween-themed toys.
7. Rid your house of the bad stuff. Bring your leftover candy to the office or give to the neighborhood kids.

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