

UPDATED: 17 supplements for women with early breast cancer (part three of series)



October is Breast Cancer Awareness month, so I wanted to reprise an article from a series I wrote previously about natural ways to support breast cancer treatment. I hope you find this article helpful once again, or for the first time if you're a more recent reader!

In the first article of this three-part series, I issued a challenge to the medical profession to inaugurate a new era of **Active Holistic Surveillance** for women with early DCIS, a form of pre-cancer that is often treated aggressively with mastectomy—sometimes bilateral. The article was entitled **“You’ve just been diagnosed with breast cancer: don’t just stand there, do nothing!”**

But Active Holistic Surveillance goes way beyond simply waiting for the other shoe to drop while women get mammograms, MRIs and sonograms. As you learned in part two of this series (“6 crucial lifestyle hacks for women with DCIS breast cancer”), there are important lifestyle modifications that can keep cancer at bay.

Now in part three of this series, I offer a comprehensive list of the supplements we use in my practice to prevent breast cancer from recurring. I often joke with patients: “We’re going to pickle you with so many healthy nutrients that no self-respecting cancer cell would want to hang around in your body!”

1) Iodine: Breast cancer hates iodine; while evidence in humans is scant, test tube and animal studies suggest iodine can encourage breast cancer cells to self-destruct. But dosing iodine appropriately can be tricky—too much can actually damage the thyroid, or send it into over-drive. Taking some kelp pills on your own is no substitute for a carefully administered trial of high-dose iodine under the supervision of a health professional

2) Garlic: Studies confirm dietary garlic and garlic-derived compounds reduce the development of mammary cancer in animals and suppress the growth of human breast cancer cells in culture. My favorite anti-cancer formulation of garlic is AGE (Aged Garlic Extract) because of the unique compounds formed by the aging process.

3) Modified citrus pectin: Works in a variety of ways to combat cancer metastases.

4) Vitamin D: Women who are deficient in vitamin D are more likely to get breast cancer, and when they do, it’s likely to be more aggressive. D has a hormone-like action on receptors in breast tissue, rendering them more resistant to malignant

transformation.

- 5) **EGCG:** Women who consume large amounts of green tea, a potent source of the polyphenol EGCG, enjoy significant protection against breast cancer. EGCG has also been shown to inhibit tumor growth, proliferation, migration, and angiogenesis of breast cancer.
- 6) **DIM:** Diindolemethane, a derivative of cruciferous vegetables, has been shown to have an anti-proliferative effect on breast cancer cells.
- 7) **Melatonin:** Female shift workers, who are exposed to artificial light that suppresses nocturnal production of melatonin, have a higher risk of breast cancer. According to a recent study, melatonin supplements may slow the progression of breast cancer. I prescribe melatonin 20 mg at bedtime for breast cancer patients; most women report that, while it helps them sleep, even that high dose doesn't make them excessively drowsy.
- 8) **Curcumin:** Just as in many other cancers, considerable evidence supports the use of curcumin in an anti-breast cancer regimen.
- 9) **CoQ10:** According to a few small studies, Coenzyme Q10 or Ubiquinol might exert anti-breast cancer effects.
- 10) **Cannabidiol:** CBD or cannabidiol is a non-hallucinogenic derivative of marijuana or hemp. It possesses immune-modulatory effects that might make it helpful for breast cancer.
- 11) **Cranberry:** Beyond its benefits to the urinary tract, cranberries have been found to possess phytochemicals that slow breast cancer proliferation. Unsweetened concentrates or standardized extracts are preferable to sugary juices.
- 12) **Tocotrienols:** A family of nutrients found in palm oil, rice or wheat bran, tocotrienols have been shown to exert potent anti-breast cancer effects.
- 13) **Flax lignans:** Studies confirm that a higher intake of dietary lignans may be associated with improved breast cancer survival in postmenopausal women. The enterolactones in flax act to keep estrogen in check. My favorite flax lignan supplement is Brevail.
- 14) **Omega 3s:** EPA and DHA from fish oil have been shown to put the brakes on breast cancer cell growth.
- 15) **AHCC and medicinal mushrooms:** Advanced Hexose Correlated Compound (AHCC) and mushroom derivatives have important immune-enhancing properties. Faulty immune surveillance has been implicated in cancer progression.
- 16) **Probiotics:** Dysbiosis, a harmful alteration in the balance of intestinal flora, may impair the natural intestinal detoxification of cancer-promoting estrogen metabolites. While no specific breast-cancer preventive probiotic has yet been discovered, maintaining healthy intestinal flora is likely warranted for women at risk.
- 17) **Pomegranate:** Recent studies have suggested a role for potent extracts of pomegranate in reducing the aggressiveness of prostate cancer; preliminary research suggests that pomegranate may act similarly to prevent or control the growth of breast cancer.

Keep in mind that this list is applicable only to the problem of reducing the risk that cancer will return when early DCIS is the diagnosis; Advanced Holistic Surveillance has not been demonstrated to be the right approach to all breast cancers. More advanced breast cancers may require conventional treatment, along with other supplements not listed here, or with some omitted from this list because of their potential to interfere with chemo, radiation, hormonal treatments or new forms of immunotherapy. **BOTTOM LINE:** *Consult a knowledgeable, credentialed nutrition professional when battling any serious medical condition!*