

Sweat Out Breast Cancer Risk

The next time you work out, be sure to break a sweat. According to researchers at the University at Buffalo (UB), women who participate in strenuous physical activities significantly cut their risk of developing breast cancer later in life.



During the course of the study, published in *Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise*, researchers interviewed women between the ages of 40 and 85 to determine how much strenuous physical activity they had two, 10 and 20 years prior to the interview, and specifically at age 16.

The results showed that those women who reported an average of 3.5 hours per week of sweat-producing physical activity even 20 years prior cut their breast cancer risk in half. Further, women who reported strenuous activity at age 16 had a 35 percent to 45 percent reduction in risk, while postmenopausal women active at all four time periods had a 50 percent decrease in risk.

The time of a woman's first menstrual cycle and the age she first gives birth have been identified as potentially important periods relative to her risk of breast cancer, according to lead author Joan Dorn, Ph.D., assistant professor of social and preventive medicine in UB's School of Public Health and Health Professions. "For premenopausal women, whose mean age was 46 at the time of the interview, 20 years prior may have placed them, on average, around the time of their first pregnancy. It's possible that our observation of a protective effect [of exercise] coincides with this important time period," Dorn noted.

"These results, combined with what we know about the benefits of physical activity in protecting against other chronic diseases, are enough to tell women to get out there and get some exercise."

Source: University at Buffalo, www.buffalo.edu

Yo-Yo Dieting Puts Heart Health on a String

The quest for a perfect figure can lead many girls and women through a cycle of repeated weight loss and weight gain, called yo-yo dieting. Researchers at the University of Michigan Health System (U-M) and VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System (VAAHS) found that those who lose and then regain at least 10 pounds in a yearlong period at least five times over a lifetime may be setting themselves up for heart problems after menopause.

Claire Duvernoy, M.D., director of the cardiac catheterization laboratory at the VAAHS and an assistant professor at the U-M Medical School, reviewed women's weight and weight fluctuations over a lifetime and compared these to the blood flow to their heart and how the lining of the blood vessels were affected. She found that postmenopausal yo-yo dieters were more likely to have reduced myocardial blood flow, regardless of their weight at the time of the study.

"Even if a woman in our study was now thin, getting there by yo-yo dieting was shown to have a negative effect on the blood flow to her heart," said Dr. Duvernoy, who

added that reduced blood flow to the heart could be an indicator of a blockage in coronary arteries, the small blood vessels of the heart. Left untreated, a blockage could eventually trigger a heart attack or stroke. She noted that the best way to avoid postmenopausal heart problems is to recognize early that yo-yo dieting is not a good tool for long-term health.

"Eating nutritious foods in moderation and getting moderate exercise several times a week is really the best way to stay healthy over a lifetime," said Dr. Duvernoy. "Nature doesn't intend for each and every one of us to have a model-perfect figure; it's far more important to make healthy choices about food and exercise."

Source: University of Michigan Health System, www.med.umich.edu

