

Reduced-Fat, Balanced Diet May Cut Death Risk From Breast Cancer

Long-term adherence to a reduced-fat diet that includes a robust daily intake of fruits, vegetables, and grains reduces the relative risk for death from breast cancer in postmenopausal women, according to investigators from the Women's Health Initiative (WHI) study.

"A dietary change can favorably influence a woman's risk of dying from breast cancer," summarized lead investigator Rowan Chlebowski, MD, PhD, Los Angeles Biomedical Research Institute, Harbor-UCLA Medical Center, Torrance, California at a presentation of the study at the meeting of the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) in Chicago in 2019.

In the trial, 48,835 postmenopausal women (aged 50–79 years) who did not have breast cancer and whose intake of fat was about one third or higher of their total daily calories were randomly assigned to a usual-diet group or a dietary intervention group.

The goals of the intervention were to reduce fat intake to 20% of daily calories and to consume daily five servings of vegetables and fruit and six servings of grains. This dietary intervention significantly reduced fat intake and increased fruit, vegetable, and grain intake. It resulted in a modest weight loss (3%) (for all, $P < .001$), the researchers report.

The dietary intervention lasted for a period of 8.5 years. During that time, there were 8% fewer breast cancers in the intervention group. Deaths after breast cancer (ie, breast cancer followed by death from any cause) were significantly reduced in the intervention group, both during the 8.5 years of intervention and the cumulative follow-up period.

"This study shows that diet can make a difference in the risk of dying from breast cancer. This study makes clear there are no downsides, only upsides to a healthier diet, and it adds to a growing volume of studies showing similar positive effects across cancer types," ASCO President Monica M. Bertagnolli, MD, commented in a statement.

Nick Mulcahy, Medscape Oncology, May 16, 2019

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