



## Milk contains anti-cancer nutrients

From the first day a woman starts giving herself monthly breast exams, she wonders if she will among the 1 in 8 women diagnosed with breast cancer in her lifetime. Sorting fact from popular fiction about nutrition and breast cancer is challenging and makes it difficult to choose the best foods for long-term health.

A popular myth, one with long-term health consequences, is that consuming milk products increases your risk of breast cancer.

**Question:** What theories link milk to breast cancer?

**Answer:** Most are based on concerns about saturated fat in milk, potential contaminants such as pesticides, and certain growth factors that promote cancer cell growth in the laboratory.

**Q:** What do studies of people demonstrate?

**A:** Much of the confusion and perceived controversy comes

from the difficulty of studying people and their diets. Contrary to popular claims, there is good evidence that two key nutrients in milk, calcium and vitamin D, actually reduce the risk of breast cancer.

In an attempt to sort out the confusion, Patricia Moorman at Duke University and Paul Terry at the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences published an article that summarizes the results of 46 studies on the topic. They identified many limitations in the studies they reviewed and concluded, "Overall, the published studies reviewed herein do not provide consistent evidence for an association between dairy product consumption and breast cancer risk."

**Q:** What is the best strategy to reduce the risk of breast cancer?

**A:** The consensus of scientific studies supports consuming a variety of foods in moderate amounts, including vegetables,

fruits and whole grains, along with lower-fat milk and milk products, and lean meats, poultry, fish, beans and nuts.

Perhaps the most important factor related to diet is maintaining a healthy body weight. And because the causes of breast cancer are not well understood, the most important thing to be obsessive about is regular screening for early detection.

If you are concerned about your risk of breast cancer or have been diagnosed with it, you will find "The Breast Book," by Dr. Susan Love, to be an invaluable resource that will help you make the best decisions and ask the right questions of your health-care providers.

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