

# Fight Breast Cancer

Important steps you can take to reduce your risk.

BY KAREN ASP

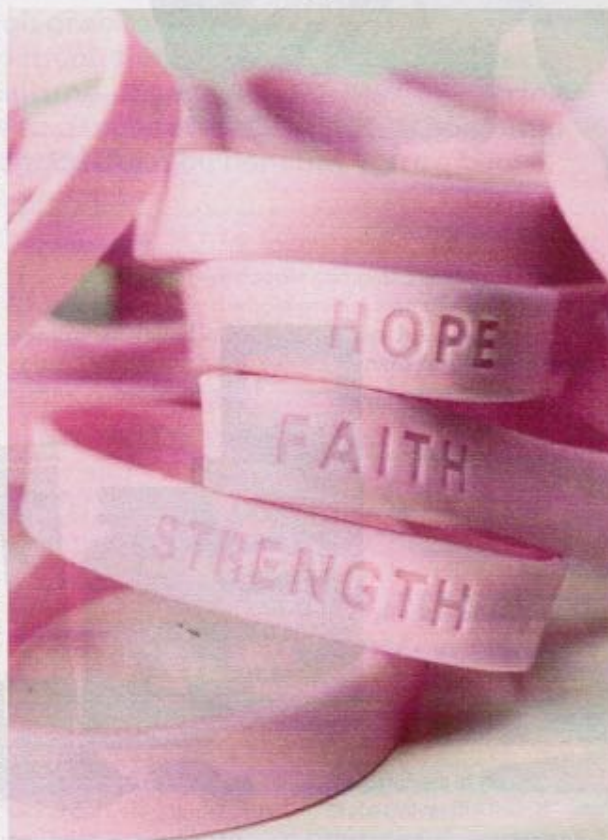


**THE RESEARCHER SAYS...**

## Make weight loss a priority after menopause

While it's a good idea to prevent weight gain as much as possible before menopause, it's also clear that weight loss after menopause can significantly lower breast cancer risk, perhaps by up to half. Why? Carrying excess pounds post-menopause increases your estrogen levels. Those higher levels may make you more susceptible to the type of breast cancer called estrogen receptor-positive (ER-positive), which accounts for 70% of all breast cancer cases. It's true that it can be more difficult to shed pounds after menopause, so it's essential to monitor your portions and exercise often. Staying active may also help relieve some menopausal symptoms like mood swings, hot flashes, troubled sleep, and forgetfulness.

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**THE NUTRITIONIST SAYS...**  
**Eat antioxidant-rich foods**

Fruits and vegetables that are high in carotenoids—pigments that give plants their orange, red, and yellow colors—provide stronger cancer protection than other produce. (The carotenoids are powerful antioxidants that can fight damaging “free radicals” in your body.) So load your diet with sweet potatoes, pumpkin, carrots, red bell peppers, oranges, watermelon, tomatoes, and cantaloupe. Also, some research shows that cruciferous vegetables like broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, and radishes can help prevent breast cancer. Whatever you grab at the market, make sure to consume it with a healthy fat like a drizzle of olive oil to help your body better absorb the beneficial nutrients.

**STACY KENNEDY, M.P.H., R.D.**, certified oncology nutritionist at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in Boston



**THE ONCOLOGIST SAYS...**

## Know the screenings you need

There's a lot of confusion about when you should get your first mammogram. Here's how to make sense of it all:

- ▶ If you have a normal risk of breast cancer with no family history, talk to your doctor about beginning mammograms at age 40.
- ▶ If an immediate family member had breast cancer before the age of 50, start getting mammograms 10 years prior to their diagnosis. For example, if your mom was diagnosed when she was 42, you'll want to get your first mammogram at 32.
- ▶ If you had genetic testing and learned you had a mutation, like BRCA1 or BRCA2, you should be referred to a high-risk clinic and/or a breast surgical oncologist to begin screening mammograms or breast MRIs. Your breast surgeon should advise you on various preventive measures as well.

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