Combating Heart & Breast Cancer Risks In Women Transcript

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Introduction to Dr. Kristi Funk

Welcome, everybody, and thanks for joining us on this heart disease reversal summit. We're having a great time doing this, and I hope you're getting tremendous benefit from this as well.

And today, we're grateful to have here Dr. Kristi Funk, a physician specializing in women's health and particularly breast health, with a long, you know, a long history of having done tremendous work in this field.

Let me tell you a little bit about her. She's a board certified breast cancer surgeon and physician, best selling author, keynote speaker and women's health advocate.

For decades, she's practiced as a surgical breast specialist at the Pink Lotus Breast Center in Los Angeles, as an expert in minimally invasive diagnostic and treatment methods for all types of breast disease.

And she's helped thousands of women through breast cancer treatments, including well known celebrities like Sheryl Crow and Angelina Jolie. We've turned to her for her surgical expertize, but Dr.

Funk operates the Pink Lotus Breast Center in Beverly Hills, Fuzing The state of the art screening genetic testing, diagnosis, surgical treatments, holistic care, preventive strategies with and with compassionate care all under one roof.

So it's really unique. What's what's unique in breast care specialists today. So we're going to talk to Dr. Funk about heart health, the relationship between heart health and breast cancer, and the relationship and heart health in women in general.

To give us some more insight into how this differs from women to men and some opportunity for you to take charge of your health, particularly if you're a woman or a man, but particularly if you're a woman, you have some more insight and to know what to do and what to look for.

So welcome. Thank you. And Happy New Year. Happy New Year. I'm excited to be here with you and everyone else. Great. All right.

How Breast and Heart Health Overlap

So let's start so to start out with as a breast cancer specialist, how does women's health care in general and preventing and preventing and treating breast cancer interact with women's heart health?

And how have you seen those risk factors overlap? This is a tremendous opportunity for women to control their health. For both, the number one is the number one killer of all of us women heart disease and the number one cancer killer of all of us women breast cancer.

The overlap is beautiful because all of the dietary and lifestyle interventions that you would employ to maximally reduce your risk of ever getting breast cancer, or if you already are afraid of having it recur or cause your death, are the very same dietary changes and behaviors you would employ to maximally reduce all of your risk factors for the numero uno killer heart disease.

So namely, when we're thinking about these risk factors, there's like a scale when it comes to breast and there are four boulders on the scale that if you have one of them, the rest of them are pebbles and they matter and they can certainly tip and even scale, but the boulders really need to get removed.

And they are the very same boulders that tip us toward heart disease and the the heart disease risk factors like

high blood pressure, high LDL, smoking, drinking alcohol, high body mass index being overweight, high insulin and high blood sugars being diabetic.

All of these highs that go along with the big risk factors for getting heart disease will naturally just disappear without medications, without intervention, if you just get rid of the boulders.

So the big four, Dr. Fuhrman, are a boulder who would be eating animal products. So meat, dairy, cheese, eggs, all meats, including poultry and fish, are going to be boulder.

So eating a wholesome plant based diet and nutrition and diet would be lifting that boulder off another one is being overweight or obese. So getting to and then maintaining ideal body weight would lift the boulder off drinking excessive alcohol.

So drinking less or no alcohol would lift a boulder off. And then the big final boulder is being sedentary. So exercising, busting a move, even if you start slowly like 5 minutes a day, I will take it.

But I do have lost year goals. If you can carry out a conversation I want to see 5 hours a week. If you're super sweaty, out of breath, two and a half hours a week should be your ultimate exercise goals.

And then once you've perfected your scale, you can start looking at other contributors when it comes to breath. Smoking is really not as strong of a risk factor as it is for heart disease, but it is there, especially if you are younger and prior to your first full term pregnancy.

Smoking has a big breast impact, but smoking would be one environmental toxicities, emotional stress. These are all going to also contribute to your risk for both heart and breast disease.

Wow, you sound like a lifestyle medicine physician and a breast surgeon. I am getting board certified in ACL. Yes, that's phenomenal. That's great. It's great that you've mixed that marry the two together, right?

Yes. Let's be really very comprehensive in your approach indeed. So what do you think that two things. How do we recognize heart disease? How it's presents in a woman may be a different presentation than a male.

So a woman makes sure she catches it early.

Womenu2019s Heart Attack Symptoms and Key Risk Factors

And what are some of the the signs that she has to take a more aggressive approach immediately and not delay and wait to, like, change her, you know, lose weight, not to do it right now because you're in trouble.

You better get going right now. And what are some of these risks they can they have to look for? Yeah. Okay, great questions. So, you know, this is an important answer to listen to and then like change up things because just in 2023, the European Society of Cardiology found that women get this, ladies, we are 3.8 times more likely to die from a heart attack in the first 30 days after having one versus men.

And we're more than twice as likely to die in the next five years from heart disease. So what are the signs of symptoms of like, whoa, this could be a heart attack.

Maybe I need to get literally to the phone and call 911 right now. And what are the the whisperings of like trouble is on the way, but you have solid time to intervene.

So men typically present with like rushing chest pain, the clutch over the chest, over their heart. On the left side right, they say an elephant was sitting on my chest.

That is not usually the way that women present with an ongoing heart attack or angina, chest pain. So their symptoms are much less obvious and can be attributed more readily to other things other than our heart.

So instead of that crushing chest pain, women have a more subtle type of of just chest pressure or tightness throughout. It could simply be presenting with nausea and vomiting or shortness of breath or pain in your neck or jaw, throat, even your shoulders.

Upper back between the shoulder blades, upper abdomen, just a pain, a feeling of indigestion or heartburn. A real big one is extreme fatigue, inexplicably tired like all your limbs are heavy.

You may feel dizzy. You could have a fluttering in your chest, which is like palpitations, like your heart is just beating too fast or irregularly. And then finally you could have swelling, pretty sudden swelling of your feet and ankles, your legs, even your abdomen.

So if you have any of these symptoms and they're sudden onset and you just feel that this these you could be having a heart attack and it no one's going to wonder or laugh at you for calling 911.

And if your loved one were having symptoms as a man with crushing chest pain, you'd be on that phone or whisking off in the car to the nearest E. R. So do yourself that favor and treat these less common symptoms as just as significantly as we would a man with crushing chest pain.

So that's the first thing that we present differently. So we need a high index of suspicion, ladies, for all of these more subtle symptoms that are definitely tied to the same heart attack risk.

Second up, you ask Dr. Fuhrman what risk factors we should be aware of so that we can intervene and then lower the chances of dying from that number one killer.

So the first one is to know your blood pressure. High blood pressure undoubtedly is the single most important contributor to heart disease. So know your blood pressure and then with your doctor, work to get down to a normal range.

You definitely want your blood pressure under 130 over 80. That's the definition of a high blood pressure. The high number being over 130 or the diastolic, sorry, the lower number being over 80, second up.

We I mentioned in passing having high blood sugar, high insulin, being type two diabetic. This is, in almost all cases entirely reversible by by a whole plant based diet.

And on average, it would take 22 weeks to get up crazy amounts of insulin to none. You do not have to be type two diabetic with rare exception. It is a choice you are unwittingly making.

Every time you listen to mouth, what you chew and swallow down is truly medicinal, and what you chew and swallow down needs to be anti-inflammatory so that your immune system can do its job and reverse diseases that are present naturally, such as high blood pressure and high blood glucose.

High insulin. Another one we talked about is LDL cholesterol. You do not want to be one of the partakers of the most commonly prescribed medication on the planet, Lipitor.

This is also unnecessary because it's entirely controllable for the most part through diet and exercise. So know your cholesterol level and see if your doctor can check your hemoglobin A1C for diabetes risk ideal body weight. Just get on the scale.

There's another indicator of maybe we're having a heart to heart attack risk that we can eliminate, and that is just being overweight or obese. Body mass index, Google it put in the digits of your height and your weight and see if you're too high.

Over 24.9 is too high and so you're going to lose some weight. You're going to get back into normal risk and stay there. High stress, anxiety, depression.

These things matter because they directly translate into a cellular response, right? When you're chronically stressed, you are having inflammatory markers like C-reactive protein and Interleukins flying around, impairing your immune system from doing its job as squelching the big daddy of it all.

Oxidative stress. And when you have more oxidative stress than you do, antioxidants running around to squelch that inflammation, a window of opportunity opens for disease to step in.

Whether that disease is a huge killer like heart disease or stroke or diabetes or obesity, or the dreaded C cancer or the disease is just something that steals you of your joy and zest for living doesn't kill you.

But here it is, ruining every day. It could be depression and anxiety, joint pain, asthma, autoimmune disorders, irritable bowel syndrome, you name it, and diet and lifestyle probably can affect it for better or worse, depending on your daily choices.

Couple of other risk factors for heart disease that you want to examine in your own life and choices. Smoking such a big risk factor, you just really have to take steps the same, you know?

So I didn't say it was stress and anxiety and depression. You may need to see a mental health expert to help you work through issues. Or maybe you just need to start literally meditating, deep breathing, being mindful of stressful situations and then approaching them differently or avoiding them altogether.

When it comes to smoking and alcohol use, again, you might need professional help, or you just might need that wakeup call to abstain and find like minded individuals who support you always in in those choices, rather than like, Oh, come on, just one drink's not going to hurt. It may hurt you.

You may not be, you know, a couple of drinks a week and no big deal kind of a drinker. You may be like, I'll take the whole bottle, please. Right. We need to we need to reexamine how we're interacting with these risky substances.

And I talked about diet for sure. You want to look at your diet, it is high. If you have high cholesterol, stop chewing and swallowing down cholesterol.

There is a tip, right? No plant food on the planet contains any cholesterol, even things you might think like avocado, olives. Note they have fats, but they don't have cholesterol.

So stop eating cholesterol if you have high cholesterol, for starters. And then what would your plate up with?

Why Lifestyle Changes Beat Medication Alone

Fruits and vegetables, legumes, lentils, beans, seeds, nuts and drink water for the most part. Okay. There are some other teas are fabulous antioxidant laden, even coffee without all the trappings of of mocha sirups and whipped cream on top are antioxidant laden as well.

But for the most part, your drink of choice should be water and finally, I already talked about physical activity aspirations in terms of 5 hours of two and a half hours, but just best moves, you know, just get up and go for a walk after dinner, which, by the way, immediately plummets your blood sugar so you don't get that insulin spike no matter what you just ate.

Get up and walk for a mere 15 minutes and you will do a world of good to normalize your blood sugar right after a meal. That's. That's my long answer.

Right. I'm just going to want to clarify. I'm sure you agree. I want to make sure that people are really clear with this, that because you mentioned if you have high blood pressure, make sure you control this with your doctor, things like that.

And I want to say that to make this clear, that controlling your blood sugar with doctor care but with medication, your blood pressure with medication or controlling your blood pressure, your blood sugar with medication or controlling your cholesterol medication does not equate.

It's not it's a hundred times weaker. It's not the same thing as lowering your blood pressure by cutting out the salt and eating whole plant foods and getting rid of all the processed foods out of your diet, getting all the oil out of your diet.

And other words, if you could, because 75% of people with high blood pressure have normal blood pressure within four weeks when they change their diet, 75% knock it out completely.

I'm saying that if you have any of these risk factors Dr. Funk's mentioned, get rid of them through aggressive dietary changes and don't sure you might temporarily need some looking at if it's really high, but don't think that because your blood pressure or your blood sugar is controlled medication, that you're safe.

Because don't forget, with all the people going to doctors and getting control of medications, they're still dying of heart disease. The normal cause of death is still heart disease.

So the drug so we've got to take charge this and have a normal blood pressure without medication, a normal blood sugar without medication in normal cholesterol without medication, normal body weight without medication.

We've got to earn these parameters. And I'm sure you would agree that earning it is much more effective than drugging them down, right? Oh, absolutely.

And it goes without saying that the this Lipitor explosion in the prescription pad world and even, you know, angioplasties and bypass, they do not it can prolong life for a little bit, but they don't actually reduce the overall mortality from heart disease.

All these pills and procedures, they're just Band-Aids giving you a little bit more time when all you had to do again, for the most part, there's always exceptions where it just doesn't work out the way we intend.

But all you had to do was really dove into the deep end of this delicious world of plant based eating and moving and thinking and loving and forgiving and being in this more focused, mindful way of living your life with the intention of living it healthfully and all of those diseases, all of those risk factors just magically go away, and you're enjoying every step of it.

It's really quite remarkable. Once your eyes are opened and if it takes that heart attack and it takes that cancer scare to bring you to this crossroads, then embrace that moment as the wakeup call you needed to live forever after as healthfully and, you know, lifespan and health span.

Right. We want them both. And this crossroads is a moment of choice. And so we're here to help you try to make the right research driven, scientifically proven choices to achieve the goals that you want.

Community Support and Breast Buddies

That's cool. And I could see that what you do is that because when people are living in fear and taking poor care of their health, then the fear and the stress of being sick is, is a risk factor.

It is, and by the way, is really not sustainable. A fear driven behavior change is not sustainable because you can't stay that heightened in like, oh, my gosh, I have cancer.

Well, it was two years ago. Oh, my gosh, I can't you're not going to feel that way anymore. So that fear is the motivating factor. It needs to be the opposite.

It needs to be that your embracing the love and the joy and the healthful change that comes and that's your goal

because that is sustainable, right? Being able to run one mile tomorrow and two miles in a month, that those are beautiful goals.

Right? That's the cool. That is so cool that you're working with some big women at the center on your website, what you do to encourage to empower women to work collectively, to support each other, to achieve these lifestyle goals.

And Dr. Funk, I know that you have a lot of services and features that you offer women who want to, like, work together, empower each other, get support.

And so what do you do to encourage women to have the right emotional outlook and the right mindset to feel good about this aggressive dietary change that you're advocating And I'm advocating so they don't feel lonely, socially isolated and feeling like they're that this is difficult to be living this way in today's society where people are raised to commit suicide with food, how do they feel good about being different, you know, and what and what do you and what services do you have available to them that help women feel like they're doing this as a team with other people supporting them?

Right. So the way to not feel alone and isolated in this is to find your tribe and to dive in and join them daily or as frequently as you wish. One thing we offer online is a totally free community called Pink Lotus Power Up.

You can access it at pinklotus.com and you'll see on that site there's sort of three portals you can enter the breast center proper, the brick and mortar, or you can just do virtual consultations with me.

I'm always happy to consult on any breast issues whatsoever, but the one I'm talking about is called Power Up and in there you're going to find a world of opportunity to connect with others.

Or if you're more of the shy voyeur type, you can just click around into all of the educational tools. We have everything from blogs on how to screen.

If you're high risk for breast cancer to how to eat. I have an online cooking show that I do on Instagram and YouTube and Facebook monthly that teaches you how food is powerful medicine and my friend holistic nutritionist Chrissy and I cook live with Chrissy and Dr.

Kristi and we just teach you how you can approach your own kitchen with or without fear and not feeling intimidated. It's really fun. My favorite my favorite offering through Power Up is called Breast Buddies. So it's it's there's a a study that showed in women who have had breast cancer those reporting out low levels of psychosocial support and connectivity have a 57% increase in mortality.

So it is very important that if you don't have a if you don't have a supportive crew around you, you can have one through breast buddies. And what this does completely free is it takes newly diagnosed women and matches them age for age, stage for stage and treatment for treatment with those who have been there, done that, and they are literally there online waiting for you because they can't wait to come alongside you and be a source of encouragement and support and friendship so that you have that social connection that literally translates on a cellular level to decreasing mortality from breast cancer.

So Power Up, please check it out. And then we also empower you with products in the Elements Store. Each one of these products is meant to help a woman on her breast cancer journey before, during or after a diagnosis.

And it always promotes health. Everything is always vegan. Not everything is supplement based. A lot of it is like scar creams that I've found to truly be effective creams for radiation if you're going through that, certain garments that are helpful.

So it's kind of thoughtfully culled all of this together over my 23 years of being a surgeon and put it in one place for you.

Closing Encouragement

Terrific. All right. Well, well, thanks for joining us, everybody. uhm Dr. Funk. So I'm happy you're part of this community and you're and you're doing this to motivate and educate women and being a leader in this field.

So thank you for your participation and thanks, everyone, for joining us today and keep you can do this, everybody. You can jump in and do this and don't wait till a medical tragedy or something happens.

Start it right now. Today start. Okay. All right. Take care, everybody. Thanks again, bye.