Join Aimee Duffy MD for her insight on Breast Health Awareness! Transcript

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Fall Colors and Breast Health Awareness

Hey, it's Dr. Amy Duffy, and we know it that time of year when we start to see the fall colors coming in on the trees, the orange, yellows, reds. We're seeing it talked about on social media.

Everybody's excited about fall, we're getting pumpkins and pumpkin spice lattes are in the stores now, all exciting. But another color that we see very often during the month of October is pink, that's to acknowledge our support for the fight against breast cancer.

And there's a lot of conversation about breast, cancer awareness or breast. Cancer fight, but I really want to call it breast health awareness. So I think it's important.

not only that we want to treat and help to find a cure for those who have been diagnosed with breast cancer but what's really also important is the conversation about how did we get cancer in the first place and are there ways that We can do things about it right now to prevent it from happening to me.

How Breast Cancer Develops

So maybe you have a strong family history or a friend or somebody like that or you're just concerned about that or just in general we want to stay healthy as long as we possibly can.

So let's talk a little bit about what that means. What's important to discuss first is what went wrong to cause breast cancer in the first place. Cancer cells are really tricky little buggers in that they're very sensitive to any changes in their environment and that leads to changes and the cells and once that change in These cells become super powered mutants and they take on a life of their own and don't really follow the rules anymore.

And breast cells are very special in that they're very sensitive to hormone related changes so they are more susceptible to these mutant changes that happen and can quickly take a on life on their.

So we need to make sure we understand how does that happened and what are some of those things that can promote these cells from changing into normal behaving cells.

changing from normal behavior cells into misbehaving cells, right? So there are a lot of known risk factors that we have that increase our risk for breast cancer.

Genetic, obviously, family history. If you have a strong family, especially a close relative like a sister or a mother diagnosed with breast, cancer that increases your risk.

Some definitely we know that there is hormone trigger. So hormonal imbalances, hormone replacement that is very estrogen dominant because estrogen stimulates breast tissue and can stimulate some of these cells to start to misbehave and be misunderstood.

And then there's environmental lifestyle factors like smoking, exposure to chemicals, things like that that we know that are increased risk factors as well.

Major Breast Cancer Risk Factors

One of the things that's interesting is that we talk about hormones. However, we know that the more babies that you have, so the most pregnancies you've had, and especially if you breastfeed babies, then that actually reduces your risk because it gives you space away from estrogen.

So when you're pregnant, you are swimming in progesterone, which is a very good positive hormone. Not that estrogen is bad, but too much estrogen can be of concern.

So when you're pregnant, you've got lots of progesterone and if you continue through that pregnancy with breastfeeding, it also suppresses any estrogen stimulation to the breast tissue.

That's why pregnant women often don't start their menstrual cycles right away once they breastfeed. So that's an understanding to some degree of how hormones can be related, but it's specific hormone related.

So it is not all just hormones in general or any exposure, that it the different types. What happens is that this can really be confusing and often devastating for a lot of women because they don't think they have any of these risk factors.

They didn't use any hormones, they do not have a family history, and they are not smokers. How did this happen and where did it come from? and we know you know we can't change our family history that's what you're born with but there are many other factors that we CAN change so back to the hormone conversation is can we look at our exposure to hormones and you how many pregnancies did you have?

Have we been exposed to any oral contraceptives? Obviously those are necessary for certain times of our life when we're not ready to have babies yet but we want to talk specifically about other contributors to the increased amount of estrogen in our bodies.

Hormones, Pregnancy, and Breastfeeding

And one of the most important things or common contributors for estrogen is excess body weight, because all that fat that's stored underneath our skin and around our tissues actually increases the amount estrogen that we have floating around in out body.

So 85% of US population is defined as overweight or obese. This is a huge risk factor. That's something we need to pay attention to. The other thing that goes along with that is that our standard American diet not only leads to a higher incidence of obesity and overweight people, but that Diet itself promotes inflammation and once these cells start to misfire or you know there can be some synergy there with if we have a lot of inflammation, and then our body looks at things as foreign, all these genetically modified foods, foods with lots of sugar, additives, bacteria, mold, fungal overgrowth in the environment, All of these things can contribute to inflammation in our bodies and that's going to perpetuate any abnormal cell growth happening.

So we've got to work on our diet, not just from a health perspective of weight loss, but also from minimal exposure to chemicals over time and balancing our good bacteria in our gut.

Our bodies really have an amazing ability to heal as we can eliminate some of these exposures into our body. We can start to to protect and there are key nutrients that help to support that.

So there's definitely a significant correlation. There's a lot of studies out there that talk about breast cancer risk associated with vitamin D deficiency.

Lifestyle Factors That Increase Risk

If we're not getting enough sun from our environment, then we need to make sure that we are getting adequate vitamin-D supplementation. And there is another link to Iodine and breast cancer.

So a lot of our new salts that we're eating, the mineralized, Himalayan, sea salt, things like that, don't have iodine in them. And iodide was put into our table salt.

A lot to work on thyroid and prevent something called goiters, which is in a large thyroid. But iodines is really important for our breast health as well.

There's a lots of studies linking those together. So you may want to talk to your provider or talk us about vitamin D supplementation and iodine supplementations if you're not getting adequate salt intake in your diet.

So we didn't really know that all these risk factors can contribute. So what are some other things that you can do right now to work on your breast health is you start changing your diet right away.

Eat things are real food. Anything that came from a tree, came form the ground, minimally processed. Maybe it only takes one, two, three steps to get from where it came into your body.

We pick an apple off a treat and we eat it. That's one step. We pick a tomato off the garden and we eat it. That's one step. If we decide we want to chop it up and cook it, that's another step Obviously our meat, we're not necessarily going to eat raw, but there may be a step or two to get your meat but minimally messed with is what I talk about.

We want to try to minimize any processed food that we can, any food, that's full of chemicals. If you can't read the ingredient or pronounce it, then it shouldn't be in your body.

So let's get rid of as much as we, can of those chemicals and eat lots of rich vitamins in vegetables and your good healthy fats and proteins.

Nutrition and Key Protective Nutrients

Another big anti-inflammatory is your omega. Eating more fish or taking an omega supplementation can be really helpful as well. You want to try to stick with organic foods because not only do we want minimize the packaged foods, but we wanna minimize any protein, I'm sorry, any chemicals that we may be exposed to that have been sprayed on our foods as well.

And then the other part or next step is let's move more. So obviously the more exercise that get, the potential for fat loss happens so we can get rid of some of those fat but also exercise not only helps with burning calories and weight loss and fatloss it boosts muscle which is really good for you but it also detoxes so the more that we move around and we put our sweat on the We're going to be able to release these toxins out of our body.

If we're very sedentary and we sit around, those toxins just hang out and they get stuck in our tissues and there and their not released from our bodies.

So the more we move, especially if we can sweat, the better you're gonna be. And so this needs to me not just a one time workout once a day, but we need to move more frequently throughout the day.

Get up from your desk or your chair and try to And you may want to consider a detox. There are several detoxes out there. Our office always offers several types of detox where we're monitoring and supporting and helping you to understand what it is and what you need to be doing.

So detoxing can be really helpful.

Exercise, Detox, and Hormone Testing

The other thing you can do is to get your hormones checked. So one of the big things we do in our practice is we measure hormones and we look at all the different types of hormones, your estrogens, progesterone, testosterone, DHEA, as well as cortisol, so we can see are they in the right balance because normal may not always be optimal when you look what your hormone tests say.

Let's look your your hormones and see whether there's room for supporting more progesterone or working on removing or reducing some estrogens from your hormone levels.

Consider testing for nutrients like vitamin D as well as we can test omega-3 fatty acid levels so what's your vitamin

d level and then let's supplement to make sure that it's up at optimal.

I like Vitamin D levels to be 60 to 70 that's where we really see the magic happen in terms of the benefits of what vitamin And then you can look at inflammation in your body.

There's a lot of ways to do that. We can measure something called CRP. And in our practice, we have a thermal camera. Thermal imaging is something that we do a ton of during October to support Breast Health Awareness Month.

But thermal imaging, particularly for women when we look for breast tissue, can identify areas where there is inflammation, where is more blood flow going, and if it looks out of balance if it looks asymmetrical then that's a place where we want to be more concerned.

Thermal Imaging and Proactive Screening

So this is a different test than a mammogram. Mammograms look at anatomy and they're very important and we wanna see is there a lump, is their calcification there, but Thermal imaging can see some inflammation and increase temperatures with increased blood flow up to eight years before anything might show up on a mammogram.

So we can jump on it. We can make interventions and we reduce that inflammation to that area so that we be more proactive. Get your thermal imaging done and call our office to make an appointment if that's something that you're interested in doing.

So I hope this brings some insight into the month of pink for you coming into fall and how you can take control to help improve your breast health. So reach out at carolinaintegrativemedicine.com if you have more questions or you want to schedule an appointment to talk about how we can help you.