

# How to prevent breast cancer from coming back

## Lifestyle factors that have protective effects against cancer recurrence

Manila Bulletin · 22 Oct 2025 · B-7 · CHESHIRE QUE, RND, RN, RD cheshireque@gmail.com Scan the QR code to read the full story.

All types of breast cancer can occur.

The higher the stage of cancer, the higher the chances of recurrence. Not all patients diagnosed with cancer, however, are guaranteed of cancer recurrence. The type of breast cancer that has a high rate of recurrence is the aggressive inflammatory breast cancer that is often triple-negative or Her2-positive.

Breast cancer, like all types of cancers, primarily occurs when the immune system is compromised or weakened. Therefore, it is crucial to take care of one's immune system to prevent cancer, and more so when one has fortunately survived the big C.

Immunity is commonly perceived as pertaining to respiratory diseases only. If you easily catch the flu, it's easier to connect it to having a weakened immune system. However, cancer, even if it's hormonelated, as in most cases of breast cancer, develops due to a faulty immune system. The immune cells are supposed to scavenge and kill cancer cells even before they can clump together to form tumors. This is how a person with a balanced immune system protects themselves from getting cancer. Unfortunately, if the immune system cannot produce enough natural killer cells, the cancer cells will develop and multiply until they become a full-blown cancer diagnosis.

Preventing cancer recurrence is possible. It will entail ensuring that the cancer survivor's immunity has been repaired or restored to its optimum function. Here are some lifestyle factors that greatly impact the immune system.

When it comes to cancer prevention, it is common knowledge that one's diet plays a role. However, this is the most neglected aspect. We do not take the role of diet and nutrition in cancer prevention seriously. What you eat can increase your risk for cancer recurrence. The first thing that a cancer survivor should avoid eating is fat. The breast is composed of fat cells. Fat increases inflammatory responses in the body that downregulate the immune system. It also messes with hormone balance. Breast cancer that is not triple-negative is hormone-related.

Another type of food that a cancer survivor must avoid is refined sugar and simple carbohydrates (except fresh fruits), such as sugary beverages, pastries, packaged snacks like chips, cookies, biscuits, white bread, and the like. Just like fat, refined sugars also cause inflammatory responses in the body that target the immune system.

The third type of food that a cancer survivor must bid goodbye to is dairy. Animalbased dairy products like cow's milk and cheese have been shown to increase the production of insulin growth factor or IGF-1. This growth hormone promotes the development of cysts and tumors.

Growing children need this hormone for optimum growth and development. However, adults do not need an excess of this hormone, which can upset the body's equilibrium.

Cancer cells thrive in an environment that is not well-nourished and well-oxygenated. Exercise improves blood circulation, which delivers oxygen and nutrients all over the body. Being physically active also helps in weight management. Breast cancer survivors must maintain a healthy body fat percentage, as well as a healthy weight range. Fat cells can produce hormones that promote breast cancer development. Exercise will help with muscle building to burn more body fat. Preventing cancer recurrences requires lifestyle change that includes a holistic approach, including nutrition, movement, and sleep.