

While there are many diets that claim to help you lose weight, most of these are not effective in the long term. The most effective way to lose weight is by consuming fewer calories from foods and drinks combined with expending more energy by being physically active. To maintain weight, energy intake should be equal to energy expenditure. It is important that any eating plan you follow meets your requirements for all essential nutrients such as calcium, iron, essential fats and fibre. An Accredited Practising Dietitian (APD) is able to advise on how to tailor an eating pattern to your individual needs.

## Benefits of exercise after your treatment

Physical activity is not only an essential component in maintaining a healthy weight, but has also been shown to directly reduce the risk of cancer returning by reducing the levels of hormones such as insulin and oestrogen in the body. Although certain amounts of these hormones are required by the body, high levels are believed to be involved in breast cancer. The American Cancer Society recommends at least 30 to 45 minutes, preferably up to 60 minutes, of physical activity at least five days each week. Any activities such as brisk walking, swimming and cycling are beneficial.

## Other nutritional information

### Should I eat red meat?

Lean meat is a good source of protein and iron and can be included as part of a healthy diet. The association between red meat and breast cancer is unclear. Although some large studies have shown that red meat increases the risk of breast cancer development, others have shown that the risk is not increased. The World Cancer Research Fund recommends limiting red meat to 500g per week.

### Alcohol

There is convincing evidence that alcohol increases the risk of breast cancer developing, but the association between alcohol and breast cancer recurrence is less clear. The World Cancer Research Fund and Cancer Council Australia recommend limiting alcohol intake. If you choose to drink it is recommended that women have no more than one standard drink each day and have some alcohol-free days each week. A standard drink is 10



g of alcohol, which is equivalent to one small glass of wine or one nip of spirits.

### Vitamin supplements

There is no evidence to suggest that taking vitamin supplements reduces the risk of breast cancer returning. A diet high in vegetables, fruits, wholegrain breads and cereals is proven to be protective against cancer developing. However, these beneficial effects are not seen when the nutrients are taken in supplement form. In fact, some research shows that certain vitamins when taken in high doses may

actually increase the risk of certain cancers. Ideally, you should try to get all the nutrients your body needs from foods, but certain vitamins may be helpful if the diet is inadequate. An ADP can assess whether you would benefit from taking supplements.

### Soy products

In recent years, there has been much discussion about soy products and the natural compounds they contain (phyto-oestrogens). There is a theory that a high intake of phyto-oestrogens may protect against breast cancer, but this has not been supported by scientific evidence. Phyto-oestrogens may have a cancer-protective effect, but there is also evidence that they might cause hormone-sensitive cancers to grow. Therefore, it is recommended soy foods can be included as part of a healthy diet, but avoid supplements containing high doses of phyto-oestrogens.

## What can I do to improve my chances of surviving breast cancer?

Following the recommendations in this factsheet can help reduce the risk of your cancer returning. Regular breast checks with your doctor and mammograms every year are also important to stay healthy after breast cancer.

## Further information

Dietitians' Association of Australia. [www.daa.asn.au](http://www.daa.asn.au)

NHMRC Australian Dietary Guidelines – Eat for Health. [www.nhmrc.org.au](http://www.nhmrc.org.au)

United States Department of Agriculture [www.choosemyplate.gov](http://www.choosemyplate.gov)

## Useful contacts/websites

<b>Cancer Australia</b>	<a href="http://canceraustralia.gov.au">canceraustralia.gov.au</a>
<b>Cancer Council</b>	<a href="http://cancer.org.au">cancer.org.au</a>
<b>Cancer Council helpline</b>	13 11 20
<b>Breast Cancer Network Australia (BCNA)</b>	1800 500 258 <a href="http://bcna.org.au">bcna.org.au</a>

## Supporting People with Breast Cancer Today and Every Day

- ✿ Providing screening, diagnosis, treatment and care by expert teams
- ✿ With world-class research, education and innovation
- ✿ Engaging the help of our community and supporters
- ✿ To shine a Ray of Hope



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The Westmead Breast Cancer Institute (BCI), NSW Australia, is supported by NSW Health & the generosity of the community.

Reviewed by consumers, and scientific and plain-English editors.

Version 4  
WSP 139 March 2013  
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**IMPORTANT** At all times you should rely on the expert judgement of your medical advisor(s). This information guide is not a substitute for medical advice. It is designed to help you understand and discuss your treatment.

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# Nutrition & Lifestyle After Breast Cancer

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