

Exercise aids breast cancer survival

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Study finds up to 49 percent decrease in death risk

Women who exercise after a breast cancer diagnosis can improve their chances of survival, according to a study by researchers at several universities and cancer centers, including UW-Madison.

The six-year study indicated women with breast cancer who engaged in moderate to vigorous exercise had a 35 to 49 percent decreased risk of dying from the disease. Women who had the most physical activity had higher survival rates than those with the lowest level.

A research team including inves-

tigators from the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health made the findings in a study published in the February edition of *Cancer Epidemiology Biomarkers & Prevention*.

"The results suggest that women with breast cancer who exercise are more likely to survive longer than women who are less active," said epidemiologist Amy Trentham-Dietz, a UW-Madison Paul Carbone Comprehensive Cancer Center faculty member who contributed to the

research.

She also published a separate study last year showing that women who are active have a lower risk of developing breast cancer.

In the new study, researchers surveyed about 4,500 participants from Wisconsin, Massachusetts and New Hampshire who were part of a 20-year-old Collaborative Women's Longevity Study. The women ranged in age from 20 to 79 when they were diagnosed with breast cancer between 1988 and 2001. Results were

adjusted for age at diagnosis, stage of disease, body mass index, hormone therapy use, family history, education and other factors.

The principal researchers were Crystal Holick, an epidemiologist formerly of the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle who now works for a private company in Massachusetts, and Polly Newcomb, a researcher at the Hutchinson Center. Newcomb helped establish the Carbone Cancer Center in 1987 when she was an assistant scientist at

the UW-Madison and is now a visiting scientist at the center.

Holick said that the new findings back up Trentham-Dietz's previous research and show that being active is important for women as a long-term lifestyle choice. The American Cancer Society also recommends 30 minutes of moderate activity at least five days a week.

The study was funded through grants from the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation, the Avon Foundation and the National Cancer Institute.

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