

Women with breast cancer continue to smoke, drink

September 29 2011

New research shows that Australian women are prepared to make lifestyle changes, such as altering their diet, following diagnosis with breast cancer, however they are unwilling to give up alcohol and cigarettes - increasing their risk of further cancers.

Associate Professor Robin Bell, Deputy Director of the Women's Health Group at Monash University led the research, published in the journal *Supportive Care in Cancer*.

The longitudinal study surveyed 1500 Victorian [women](#) about their smoking and drinking habits on two occasions. The first time was between 2004 and 2006, when women were asked about smoking and drinking at the time of their [breast cancer](#) diagnosis. The participants were surveyed again two years later.

Findings showed that two out of three women who were smokers when their breast cancer was diagnosed continued to smoke cigarettes.

Alcohol consumption is a known risk factor for breast cancer and women already diagnosed with breast cancer are at risk of both recurrence and development of another primary breast cancer. However, one in 12 study participants continued to drink more than four drinks per occasion, at least once a week.

Australian Government guidelines recommend drinking no more than two drinks per day.

Professor Bell said more support was needed for women with breast cancer to adopt evidence based changes for a healthier lifestyle.

“We know that around the time of diagnosis of serious disease people make changes to their lifestyle. In this study about one-third of women made some change to their diet and one-third to their physical activity.

“However, not all the changes being made are based on solid evidence. For example, some women eliminate dairy products, which is not evidence based.

"In contrast, there is no argument that stopping smoking and choosing to moderate alcohol intake are good things to do. However, the women who would benefit most from making these [lifestyle changes](#) seem to choose not to, or aren't getting help to do so," Professor Bell said.

“The outlook for women diagnosed with breast cancer continues to improve. Overall, five-year survival for women diagnosed is nearly 90 per cent, and even higher for women diagnosed in the early stages of the disease,

“Women with breast cancer should be looking to optimize their health for the years beyond their diagnosis. This includes making healthy life choices that will prevent the development of a new breast cancer or a recurrence of past disease.”

Provided by Monash University

Citation: Women with breast cancer continue to smoke, drink (2011, September 29) retrieved 23 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2011-09-women-breast-cancer.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private

study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.