

# Free e-book offers tips for reducing breast cancer risk

September 3 2015, by Jim Goodwin

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Surprisingly, preventing breast cancer can begin as early as age 2. Eating right, being physically active and keeping weight in check - even at a young age - can substantially lower breast cancer risk.

But even if healthy behaviors don't begin until age 50, women can still reduce their risk of [breast cancer](#) by up to half.

A free e-book by researchers at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis provides practical, science-based advice for lowering [breast cancer risk](#) at every stage of life. Available for the iPad and iPhone, "Together—Every Woman's Guide to Preventing Breast Cancer" is written for a lay audience to help women improve their breast health and the breast health of their loved ones.

"Breast cancer is the No. 1 health fear for many women," said Graham Colditz, MD, DrPH, the Niess-Gain Professor of Surgery at the School of Medicine. "With this e-book, we hope to put breast cancer risk in perspective and provide simple, everyday prevention tips that apply from childhood through midlife and beyond."

The e-book is based on decades of research reviewed by Colditz, who also is associate director of Siteman Cancer Center at Barnes-Jewish Hospital and Washington University School of Medicine. His co-authors are Katherine Weilbaecher, MD, a breast cancer oncologist and professor of medicine at the School of Medicine, and medical writer Hank Dart.

In addition to age-specific breast cancer prevention tips for women, the e-book includes advice for parents who want to steer their daughters toward healthy behaviors.

"We're finding more and more that youth and young adulthood are key periods in determining breast [cancer risk](#) later in life, so we've created down-to-earth guides for parents and grandparents to help young girls in their lives develop lifelong healthy habits," Colditz said.

Prevention tips targeted to children and adolescents focus largely on

helping them maintain healthy growth, eat healthy food and get enough activity every day. When children are old enough, discussions of the dangers of tobacco and alcohol are included.

For adults, the e-book focuses on nine key steps for preventing breast cancer:

- Keep weight in check;
- Be physically active;
- Avoid too much alcohol;
- Don't smoke;
- Breastfeed, if possible;
- Avoid [birth control pills](#), particularly after age 35 or if a smoker;
- Avoid [hormone replacement therapy](#) after menopause;
- Find out one's family history; and
- If high-risk, consider risk-reducing medications.

About 12 of every 100 women born in the U.S. will be diagnosed with breast cancer at some point in their lives, Weilbaecher said. A healthy lifestyle started during childhood and continued through adulthood could prevent breast cancer in more than seven of these women.

However, even if women don't practice healthy behaviors until midlife, they still can reduce their risk of breast cancer by up to 50 percent. And most of the same cancer-fighting activities also boost heart health and lower the risk of diabetes, stroke, colon cancer, osteoporosis and other conditions.

"Teaching our daughters and granddaughters how to live healthy lives is a gift that lasts a lifetime," Weilbaecher said. "It's almost never too early in life to lay the foundation for healthy behaviors. And it's almost never too late to start."

Colditz and Dart also developed [Zuum](#) - a free iPad app that estimates a person's risk of disease and provides tailor-made tips to boost overall health - and [Your Disease Risk](#), the website it's based upon.

**More information:** [itunes.apple.com/us/book/together/id1020301603?mt=11](https://itunes.apple.com/us/book/together/id1020301603?mt=11)

Provided by Washington University School of Medicine

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