

# Follow-up care for older breast cancer survivors needs to be all-encompassing

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Older women who have overcome breast cancer are likely to struggle with heart disease, osteoporosis and hypertension further on in their lives. Whether these conditions occur or not is influenced by the treatment that patients received to fight cancer, their overall weight and their age. Breast cancer survivors therefore should watch their weight and get regular exercise so that they can enjoy a high quality of life. These findings, by lead author Nadia Obi of the University Medical Center Hamburg-Eppendorf, who collaborated with the group of Prof. Chang-Claude from the German Cancer Research Center in Heidelberg, were published in Springer's *Journal of Cancer Survivorship*.

Obi's research group set out to identify risk factors that could trigger the development of [heart disease](#), [osteoporosis](#) and hypertension in [breast cancer survivors](#). They therefore assessed the health status of 2,542 breast cancer patients between 50 and 74 years old who were part of the Mamma carcinoma Risk factor Investigation (MARIEplus) study in the city and state of Hamburg and the Rhine-Neckar Karlsruhe region in Germany. Patients were asked about their health conditions before and after being diagnosed with breast cancer. Demographic information, lifestyle factors, the type of treatment they received and their levels of education were also noted.

It was found that known risk factors for cardiovascular diseases, such as being overweight, also play a role in the health of breast cancer survivors. Older women with a higher body mass index (BMI) and patients who received trastuzumab to reduce the risk of cancer relapse

had an increased risk for hypertension. (A BMI of  $>30$  kg/m<sup>2</sup> almost doubled the risk ratio.) In addition, women with higher education levels had less [hypertension](#).

Women with a lower body weight were more likely to develop osteoporosis, having a two-fold higher risk when they had a BMI of

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