



## **Study Highlights Benefits of Exercise in Lowering Breast Cancer Risk**

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**FROM: The New Zealand Register of Exercise Professionals (REPs)**

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month. It's a tribute to the ongoing work of those involved in the awareness programmes that breast cancer and the ways of minimizing risk and managing the disease are widely known. From awareness comes an understanding of the impact of the disease, funding for research and also education to reduce risks.

The NZ Breast Cancer Foundation is behind the ongoing awareness campaign and is an organisation that provides ongoing education, advocacy and funding in this area.

However, despite the work already done, the statistics are still somber reading. In NZ breast cancer is the most common female cancer with:

- Approximately 2,800 women being diagnosed with breast cancer each year.
- 7 women each day will be diagnosed with breast cancer
- 650 will most likely die this year.

The causes of breast cancer are not fully known, but some of the factors that can contribute to it developing are known. Some cannot be controlled but there are steps that can be taken to reduce risk. Women who maintain a healthy weight, have a lower risk of being diagnosed with breast cancer in comparison to overweight women. There is also evidence that regular exercise and a low fat diet can reduce the risk of breast cancer.

In a recent study published in the American Cancer Society's journal Lauren McCullough, a doctoral candidate in epidemiology at the University of North Carolina and her colleagues looked into how much exercise is enough, and at what age women have to start being physically active to get from the breast cancer reducing benefits of exercise. The results of their study indicated that women were about 30% less likely to develop breast cancer when they exercised approximately two hours a day, for five days a week in comparison to less active women. The intensity of the exercise was not important.

Including all groups in the study, the overall benefit of exercise was a 6% lower risk of breast cancer than those who did not, but certain subgroups of women enjoyed even larger benefits. However there was a more significant benefit to women with children during or after their reproductive years. The women who exercised throughout this period had a staggering 30% lower risk of breast cancer during the study period, compared with women who exercised less, or who did not exercise at all.

This study is great news for women who feel that a history of non activity will make taking up an exercise programme less effective, as this is not in fact the case. The benefits of exercise on breast cancer and other diseases are available regardless of exercise history.

Awareness starts here:

- Have a regular screening mammogram from 40
- Maintain a healthy weight and exercise regularly
- Talk to those around you to help raise awareness of breast cancer
- Head to the NZ Breast Cancer Society website and see how you can contribute this October. Friday 11 October is the Pink Ribbon Street Appeal and we strongly encourage Kiwis to get behind this fund raiser and give generously.

References:

<http://www.nzbcf.org.nz>

<http://www.cancer.org/research/researchtopreventcancer/index>

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**What is the NZ Register of Exercise Professionals (REPs)?**

REPs is an independent non profit organisation administrating the New Zealand exercise professionals register to ensure that the public receive safe and effective exercise advice.

Using REPs Registered Exercise Professionals is the “Warrant of Fitness Check” that an exercise professional and facility meet New Zealand and international standards to deliver exercise advice and instruction. REPs is affiliated globally to over 35 other national exercise professional registers through the International Confederation of Registers for Exercise Professionals (ICREPs) [www.icreps.org](http://www.icreps.org).

