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Media Release - Breast Cancer - What You Can Do To Protect Yourself
From: NZ Register of Exercise Professionals



Breast Cancer - What You Can Do To Protect Yourself

October is the annual breast cancer awareness month in New Zealand. This is a chance to reflect on the statistics, but also to celebrate the resilience of survivors and those currently undergoing treatment.

It's something that impacts on all of us, either directly or through the experiences of women we know. Breast cancer is the number one cancer for women in NZ with 3000 women diagnosed, and over 600 women dying from the disease each year. The awareness month is also a chance to educate ourselves on the steps that can be taken by women to reduce risk, and make sure all women are aware of early detection, as these make a huge difference to health outcomes for those diagnosed.

The causes of breast cancer are not fully known, but some of the contributing factors are well known. Some factors can't be controlled; women are at greater risk of breast cancer if family members have had the disease, however, even among women who do have relatives with breast cancer, most will never develop it. There are also steps that can be taken to reduce risk.

It has been proven that 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 reduced fat diet can reduce the risk of breast cancer. And if you need another reason to not smoke, it has been shown to increase the risk of not just lung cancers, it's a contributor to breast cancer also.

For those who are dealing with the physical (and non-physical) impact of a breast cancer diagnosis and treatment, exercise can still be a regular part of a wellness routine. Regular exercise can help reduce symptoms and side effects of treatment. A supportive medical team and a personalised exercise plan from a registered exercise professional can keep those undergoing treatment experiencing the benefits from regular physical activity.

The specific exercise benefits for those undergoing treatment vary. For many women higher intensity exercise is not comfortable especially when it involves upper body movement. However exercises that improve flexibility can help with range of movement and posture change associated with surgery. Stretching can also assist with stress release and relaxation

For the many women who successfully beat breast cancer, getting regular exercise is important for continued health. Physical activity can help lessen certain ongoing side effects of treatment, such as fatigue and depression, and has been shown to reduce the risk of recurrence and improve survival.

It's important to take into account energy levels and limitations. When dealing with an illness 'one size fits all' exercise advice is not a reliable source of information. We strongly advise making sure any person offering exercise advice has the right qualifications and experience. To make sure, simply ask your exercise professional 'are you a REPs registered'.

There are so many reasons to keep moving, and plenty of benefits, so don't let anything stop you.

Contact details for further information about the exercise industry:

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NZ Register of Exercise Professionals (REPs) - Independent not for profit quality mark of exercise professionals and facilities. Using REPs Registered Exercise Professionals is the "warrant of fitness check" that exercise professionals and facilities meet New Zealand and internationally benchmarked standards to deliver safe exercise advice and instruction. REPs is affiliated globally to other national exercise professional registers representing over 210,000 exercise professionals through the International Confederation of Registers for Exercise Professionals (ICREPs) - www.icreps.org

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Exercise Association of New Zealand - Not for profit exercise industry representative organisation. Its *mission is to proactively support a sustainable exercise and fitness industry in New Zealand by growing participation in structured exercise through advocacy, information and industry standards.*

