

## Feel Good Food

Think before you eat - you can make a difference!

**These days tips for healthy eating and weight control jump out at us from every newspaper and magazine and it's hard to ignore the evidence that eating a balanced diet is a sure way to protect your health and guard your waistline.**

**But the really good news is that many experts now believe that a healthy diet can also help prevent and reduce the possibility of a recurrence of breast cancer. In our report Christina Relf takes a look at the ways you can improve your diet.**

We all want to be well, to look good and have lots of energy. We all want to protect our health and help our bodies to heal themselves. And it is now widely acknowledged that what we eat can and does influence all these things. It's a fact that *everyone* will benefit from sensible adjustments to their diet, while research shows that there is a direct link between diet and cancer – both from a causal point of view, and in terms of recovery and guarding against recurrence.

### Eating to beat cancer

A wealth of research exists on the possible causes of cancer, charting trends from hereditary factors to lifestyle. It is almost impossible to pinpoint one 'cause' or 'cure' for any type of cancer. However, health professionals are now so convinced about the links between certain lifestyle factors and cancer that they are prepared to publish their findings with confidence.

The World Cancer Research Fund – which is the only major UK charity to focus exclusively on the link between diet, nutrition and cancer – tells us that the majority of cancer cases are preventable by changes in diet and lifestyle. In particular, changes in diet, they say, could prevent up to half of all breast cancer cases. The charity goes on to give some firm guidelines for cancer prevention:

- Choose a diet rich in a variety of plant based foods
- Eat plenty of vegetables and fruits
- Maintain a healthy weight and be physically active
- Drink alcohol only in moderation, if at all
- Select foods that are low in fat and salt
- Prepare and store foods safely
- Do not smoke or use tobacco in any form

These guidelines are for everyone – not just those suffering from cancer – and they could also reduce your chances of developing other illnesses such as heart disease, osteoporosis and adult-onset diabetes. Add to that the fact that by observing these guidelines we could boost our energy *and* get into that new pair of jeans, and it would seem crazy to ignore them.

For those keen to follow a more healthy approach to eating, we take a closer look at the simple adjustments we can all make to achieve real benefits, taking the WCRF's guidelines as our starting point.

**Back to your roots**

Cancer and nutrition experts confirm that some foods contain nutrients which seem to help the body's natural defences to destroy cancer-causing substances called "carcinogens" before they can cause serious damage to cells. They may also halt or reverse steps in the cancer development process. These nutrients are found in abundance in foods of plant origin – particularly vegetables and fruits, wholegrains and pulses (such as dried beans, peas and lentils).

Meanwhile, some foods are known to contain significant levels of carcinogens, and should be avoided whenever possible or eaten only occasionally. These include charred food, especially meat, as well as smoked and cured foods. In addition, some types of food, if consumed regularly and in large quantities over long periods of time, seem to provide the kind of environment that a cancer cell needs in order to grow, multiply and spread. These foods should also be eaten only rarely, if at all, and include red meat, alcohol, and foods high in fat and salt.

As well as containing essential nutrients and other important substances that help our bodies to destroy carcinogens before they cause cancer, plant-based foods and starchy foods (such as pasta, rice and bread) are naturally low in fat and calories and can therefore help with weight control. They also help us to feel full, which means we'll have less room for fatty or over-processed foods.

**Plant life**

Scientists now believe that the protective effects of vegetables and fruit arise from a combination of their key components. Some would go further, however, and authors such as Professor Jane Plant CBE and nutritionist Suzannah Olivier – both of whom have survived breast cancer themselves – claim that the 'positive' hormones produced by plants can help fight so-called 'negative' hormones, such as an excess of oestrogen, that can lead to breast cancer.

Suzannah Olivier states in her book, *The Breast Cancer Prevention and Recovery Diet*, that "the majority of breast cancers are, at least in part, related to excessive exposure to oestrogens." Meanwhile, milk and dairy products have been receiving a bad press because of supposed links to breast cancer. Indeed, the scientist Professor Jane Plant believes that in order to maximise their chances of avoiding breast cancer, women should cut out all types of dairy produce. In her utter determination to vanquish her continually recurring breast cancer, Jane Plant used her scientific training to research the causes of the disease, discovering what she firmly believes to be a clear causal link between dairy produce and breast cancer. She cites as evidence for her theory the fact that, while one woman in ten in the UK is likely to contract breast cancer, the disease affects only one woman in 10,000 in China.

**Looking east**

The Chinese do not consume dairy products. They eat little in the way of saturated fats and their diet is largely based around fresh vegetables and grains. In her book *Your Life in Your Hands*, Professor Plant claims that the West's increasing appetite for dairy products is unnatural and almost perverse: "Cows' milk isn't intended by nature for consumption by any species other than baby cows". Other cultures, she says, call breast cancer "rich woman's disease". Certainly, scientists and nutritionists would agree that the Eastern style of eating is more conducive to general good

health, and the statistics would seem to bear out these claims. Milk, says Jane, contains growth factors and hormones known to promote breast, prostate and other types of cancer.

Jane Plant believes that she finally cured herself of cancer by adopting an 'Eastern lifestyle', and her books explain how she believes all other women can help themselves to avoid the disease or dramatically increase their chances of a full recovery.

One of the strongest messages to come out of both Jane Plant and Suzannah Olivier's books is the beneficial effects of soya, which is widely used in Eastern cooking. It seems impossible to over-praise the benefits of the bean which, says Jane, "contains plant oestrogens which protect the breast in the same way that tamoxifen does". Soya is also a powerful antioxidant, playing an important role in the removal of free radicals implicated in cancer, and studies have shown that soya beans and soya products prevent the growth of a range of cancer cells. "If you do only one thing to cut your risk of breast cancer," says Jane, "please make the change from dairy to soya products."

The Dairy Council would disagree, however, and in a press release dated 24 August 2001, they claim that milk drinkers actually reduce their risk of breast cancer. It states that a Norwegian study of more than 48,000 women aged between 34 and 49 years "has revealed that life-long, regular milk drinkers reduce their risk of suffering from breast cancer by a staggering 50%, compared to women who do not drink milk." The Dairy Council's nutrition manager, Dr Anita Wells, says that the findings are consistent with a large Finnish study which also indicated similar results. In addition, claims the release, a natural fat present in dairy products, called Conjugated Linoleic Acid (CLA), is a potent anti-cancer agent – a fact also recognised by Professor Plant in her book *Your Life in Your Hands*.

Jane Plant's message is compelling, however. "I believe that I, and all those who have suffered from breast cancer but shared in my advice, have avoided death by dairy."

### **Beating tamoxifen blues**

For many whose treatment includes tamoxifen, weight gain is a distressing side effect. We asked Suzannah Olivier for her advice.

"I have spoken to lots of women who say that they feel bloated when taking tamoxifen, although official studies do not accept the theory of weight gain," says Suzannah. "There are a couple of key issues here, I think. The first is that in 50-70% of women, tamoxifen does cause menopausal-type symptoms. Add to this the fact that many women will be taking the drug at around the time when they would naturally be experiencing the menopause, and this is a time when the metabolism slows down anyway. So my advice here is that this is not a time to stop exercising. Don't give up that daily walk or swim." The next issue is that bloating is often related to water retention, which is due to the fact that the drug can interfere with the body's natural hormone levels." This is the advice that Suzannah would give to anyone experiencing water retention:

- Drink more water. Six to eight glasses a day is ideal – and if you can't face plain water then consider herbal teas or diluted fruit juice. Water helps to flush

out the system – drinking more of it will not add to the bloating. In fact, it will have the opposite effect

- Eat more watery foods, such as fruit and vegetables
- Cut right down on dehydrating drinks like coffee and alcohol
- Keep the system moving! Eating lots of fibre, like porridge, brown rice and pasta, pulses, fruit and vegetables will do the trick
- Consider adding some phyto-oestrogen rich foods like soya to your diet, but take it easy at first. Four portions a week should be just right
- Treat yourself to a relaxing massage. It's great for helping the body to rid itself of toxins stored in the muscles, and it helps with lymphatic drainage

Suzannah's book, *Banish Bloating*, has lots of advice on how to deal with water retention and keep those extra pounds at bay

### **Eating for health and weight loss**

Being overweight can considerably increase your chances of contracting major diseases such as diabetes, cancer and heart disease. Yet reaching and maintaining a healthy weight can seem difficult, particularly following treatment for breast cancer. However, weight reduction is possible provided we are committed to restricting our calorie intake and taking some form of regular exercise.

Ensuring that your diet is loaded with nutrient-rich, low-calorie foods such as vegetables, fruits, wholegrains and pulses will both increase your general wellbeing and help you avoid those high-fat snacks. Drinking plenty of water helps, too – ideally around 2 litres a day. And cutting out, or at least cutting right down on alcohol will keep your calorie intake down while at the same time protecting you from an increased risk of several types of cancer.

The only way to successfully slim down and maintain a healthy weight is to change your eating habits. Drastic slimming diets, special drinks, meal substitutes, pills and injections simply don't work in the long run, as well as potentially endangering your health. This is because, although you may lose a fair amount of weight quite quickly with these measures, when you resume your old eating habits you will eventually regain the weight you lost.

Looking on the bright side, by eating foods that are good for you, not only will you be enviably svelte – you'll also have that healthy glow that comes from really taking care of yourself. And if you combine some gentle daily exercise into your routine (experts now think that around one hour's gentle walking, or its equivalent, each day will bring significant health benefits), your metabolism will actually start to use your food in different ways – nourishing your muscles first, because it knows you'll be using them, rather than storing energy in the form of fat. Fit people use more calories at rest than unfit people. It's a fact.

Here's what the WCRF has to say about eating for health:

- Don't declare any foods forbidden – simply limit how much you eat
- Experiment with new foods – try some of the exotic vegetables and fruit that you've seen in the supermarket
- Build up a repertoire of quick, healthy and tasty dishes
- Stir-frying vegetables is great – only a minimum of oil is needed because the vegetables steam in their own juices

- Cook with herbs and spices, and try some flavoured vinegars in order to make food taste good without having to add extra fat or calories
- Look out for recipes in magazines that make healthy eating appetising and fun to prepare and serve – and why not treat yourself to a healthy eating cookbook?
- Eating smaller meals more frequently will help fight off hunger pangs
- Eat and drink slowly and give yourself plenty of time to enjoy your meal, which will aid digestion
- If you really want a takeaway choose vegetable pizza (easy on the cheese!), or something from the vegetable, seafood or chicken sections of the Chinese takeaway menu.

### Healthy eating in a nutshell

- Reduce your fat intake by eating less meat and dairy foods
- Cut down on red meat and substitute with more fish and poultry
- Eat less processed foods such as crisps, cakes and biscuits
- Grill or stew meat and steam or stir-fry vegetables
- Increase your intake of foods such as fruit, vegetables, cereals, beans and pulses
- Reduce your alcohol intake

**The information provided in this article is not a substitute for professional care and should not be used for diagnosing or treating a health problem or a disease. If you have, or suspect you may have, a health problem you should consult your doctor.**

### Contacts:

World Cancer Research Fund – [www.wcrf-uk.org](http://www.wcrf-uk.org) tel: 020 7343 4200

CancerBACUP – [www.cancerbacup.org.uk](http://www.cancerbacup.org.uk) tel: 0808 800 1234

CancerHelp UK – [www.cancerhelp.org.uk](http://www.cancerhelp.org.uk)

### Further reading:

**The Breast Cancer Prevention and Recovery Diet:** Suzannah Olivier, Penguin Books - ISBN 0140283951 £7.99 (paperback)

[www.healthandnutrition.co.uk](http://www.healthandnutrition.co.uk)

**Your Life in Your Hands: Understanding, preventing and overcoming breast cancer:** Professor Jane Plant CBE, Virgin Publishing - ISBN 0753505967 £9.99 (paperback)

**The Plant Programme: Recipes for fighting breast cancer:** Professor Jane Plant CBE and Gill Tidey, Virgin Publishing - ISBN 1852279664 £16.99 (hardback)

**Banish Bloating:** Suzannah Olivier, Pocket Books - ISBN 0671029533 £6.99 (paperback)

## Lighten up

Are lightweight breast forms the answer for the more active woman?

**Exercise is good for you. There is no shortage of advice from health experts on taking more exercise to improve our general wellbeing, as well as warding off cancer or helping with recovery. But, asks Christina Relf, what are the implications of an active lifestyle for women who wear a breast form following surgery?**

We all lead busy lives. Even for those of us who do not take regular exercise, there's still the shopping to carry, the cooking and ironing to do, running for the bus, playing with the children or simply throwing a ball for the dog. Even sitting at a computer can cause back strain.

Despite the fact that manufacturers do their best to ensure that all breast forms simulate the look, feel and movement of a natural breast, they sometimes still feel heavy and cumbersome. This is because breast forms are held away from the body in the bra cup and their weight is not distributed across the chest as that of a natural breast would be. And this can be even more pronounced for larger-busted ladies or lymphoedema sufferers.

Although self-supporting breast forms, which adhere to the body, are an ideal solution, they are not suitable for all women. One alternative is to consider a lightweight breast form, such as the Amoena Classic or Tria Light. Although still made of silicone, these are 25% lighter than traditional breast forms and, says Monika Petermann, head of product design at Amoena, "they feel and look just as natural. The advantage to the wearer is that with less weight there is greater freedom of movement and comfort." We spoke to some ladies who have switched to the lightweight breast form to see what it's really like for them.

### Life's for living

Janet, 50, had a mastectomy four years ago. As a magistrate, she is out and about every day, and she also enjoys playing badminton as well as being a tennis umpire. She heard about the Amoena Classic Light when visiting the showroom to be fitted for a replacement for her existing breast form, and has now been wearing the Classic Light for more than a year. She feels that the new form certainly fits into her lifestyle better than her previous one: "It has made a huge difference – I'm not even aware that it's there," she says. "It is far more comfortable than my old one and once it's in the pocket of my bra it doesn't move around at all."

This enthusiasm is endorsed by Dagmar, a lady in her early 50s who had a mastectomy five years ago and suffers from lymphoedema. "Since my diagnosis I try to cram as much into each day as possible – I've realised that life is too short to sit around all the time," she says.

Dagmar switched to the Amoena Classic Light when she became a model for Amoena. "Being quite large busted, I found that the prosthesis pulled the cup of my bra down and I was fed up with sore red marks on my shoulders. Also, my old breast form tended to move around in my bra which left me constantly worrying if I looked lopsided."

“Before switching to the Classic Light, I used to tell my friends that wearing a prosthesis was a bit like wearing a pair of new shoes: even though they look good and give you confidence, you just can’t wait to get home so you can take them off!” Not only does she now feel more confident and comfortable, Dagmar also reports that her lymphoedema has been eased by wearing a lighter breast form: “The reduced weight on my shoulder certainly helps – it seems to aid my circulation in that area, and I also find it easier to maintain my posture.”

Another lymphoedema sufferer, Maggie, is also enthusiastic about the Classic Light: “As well as the pain from the lymphoedema, which I tend to feel under my arm, I also suffer from back, neck and shoulder problems,” she said. “I found the difference made by the lighter breast form simply amazing – it gave me instant relief.”

Some women fear that a lighter weight might make the breast form look insubstantial, particularly in larger sizes. “Not so,” says Janet. “It looks fine, and it fits perfectly into the cup of my bra.” And all three ladies also agree that it passes the “hug test”!

### **Just do it**

Caroline, who is in her early 40s and works as a marketing manager as well as teaching fitness on a part-time basis, thinks that it’s a matter of attitude. “Life is, to a great extent, what you make it. Being told that you have to have breast surgery is a huge shock, not to mention the trauma of the surgery itself. But you have to have a positive attitude. And I believe that an essential factor in recovery is looking after your body, which includes staying fit. I have two young children who keep me on my toes and my weekends are generally spent keeping them amused. We often go cycling, ten pin bowling or ice skating and we are always tumbling around together.”

Caroline opted for a light weight breast form because she felt that it would fit in with her active life. So has it done the trick? “Yes, I wear it all the time. It’s worked wonders for my confidence as most of the time I can forget I’m wearing a breast form at all.”

Janet sums it up: “As far as I’m concerned, there are no negatives associated with a light weight breast form – just plusses. This is the most comfortable I’ve been since my mastectomy and I would recommend this breast form to any other women who find their existing one too heavy. It really has made a difference to the way I can live my life.”

## In Contact

**Do you have a story you'd like to share or some words of encouragement for other readers? Send your letters and photographs for inclusion in AMOENA Life to: Rhoda White, Editor, AMOENA (UK) Ltd, FREEPOST, Eastleigh, Hampshire, SO53 4BJ or e-mail [agrwhw@amoena.com](mailto:agrwhw@amoena.com)**

### **"Open your heart and keep believing**

I have been plagued with major ill health for the past two to three years with a new hurdle to get over every three to four months. In April '99 I suffered a heart attack and blood clot in my lung, in November of the same year I was diagnosed with breast cancer and had a full mastectomy, chest excavation and major lymph node clearance. In March 2000 I underwent an angiogram to investigate why I had the heart attack, only to be told I needed a quadruple heart by-pass which was carried out in Sept 2000.

As you can see I have been quite busy just trying to stay alive! However, I would say to everyone, if you are faced with troubled times, and it is assumed you have or you would not be receiving this magazine, keep a positive attitude. If you have a faith and believe in God, draw on that, it helps enormously. If you have good family and friends, let them into your heart and life, because they are hurting too and in the main, do not know how to handle the situation.

Following my surgery I was lucky not to require any other treatment than tamoxifen. I do suffer quite badly from the two major side effects, that being sweats and weight gain. I have gone up two sizes in my clothes and although I do not much like my new size, if this is all I have to endure for feeling well, then I consider myself a lucky woman.

With the love and support from family and friends, I am back doing all the things I used to do before these troubled times struck. I have an active life within my church and I am also the Musical Director of "The Tamar Valley" ladies Barbershop chorus in Plymouth. The members of my chorus are such wonderful people and keep me laughing throughout times that can still be difficult for me. This is better than any prescribed drug!

**Gloria C**

### **The power of prayer**

I first went to my GP in Sept 99 as I was getting pain in both breasts. He said it was probably hormonal but would send me for a mammogram. I never received an appointment and went and saw another GP a month later who also said it was probably hormonal. By the time my appointment came through it was 6 months since my first visit to my doctor and my breast had gone hard.

We were due to go on a "once in a lifetime" holiday to America and Kauai with our two teenage children, but our dreams fell apart when I was not only told I had cancer, but that the tumour filled the whole breast and they could not operate straight away. I would have to have chemo for four months first to try and shrink it.

I am a committed Christian and I also work for a Christian charity shop in

Southampton called Hope Now. Hope Now immediately contacted all their prayer partners – over 2,000 in the UK and over 600 in other parts of the world. I can honestly say that the Lord took the burden from day one. Obviously it was a huge shock but I never had any fear. I knew that the Lord would heal me in whichever way he chose. He carried me through the first week of numerous tests and biopsies and throughout my treatment.

I had the strongest chemo drugs available every three weeks and it took me 10 days after each session to recover enough strength to go back to work. My husband, children (aged 17 and 14) and my parents were a great support. We also had meals provided each week following chemo from our own church members. I received over 100 cards and letters from all over the world.

The Lord answered prayers in so many ways. I did not become anaemic, catch any infections or get an ulcerated mouth. The veins in my left arm became very irritated from one of the chemo drugs so they had to use my right arm for the last three sessions. I asked for specific prayer for this and this arm did not get irritated – in fact the Nurse was amazed at how good the veins were. Although the tumour shrunk well to start with there was still quite a lot there after the last chemo session. However, when they operated 1½ weeks later the tumour had completely disappeared and the doctors have told me “You are not a normal case”. Finally, the Lord provided two Christian nurses, whom I knew, to visit me after I came home following my mastectomy.

I know that without all the prayer support I had, I might not have survived. It was an absolute miracle that the cancer had not spread anywhere else. We are all due to go to Bali in July to replace the holiday we lost last year.

**Mrs Heather B**

### **Juicing is tops**

I had a mastectomy in June last year and am currently going through chemotherapy and am due to start radiotherapy in December. The thing I have found most helpful through my treatment is JUICING. My juicer is the best thing I have bought. My sister bought me a brilliant book with recipes for the immune system ie. beetroot, carrot and broccoli. I have found that I have more energy and have not once been refused chemo because my blood count was down. I have had no complications and I believe it is the juicing and vitamins that I take. I also believe in Echinacea for building up the immune system.

**Marie W**

### **Some foods to try**

I have just read my first issue of inform and think it's great! I would like to share with other readers some information I have gained since my mastectomy in February 2001.

- Soya milk which sometimes separates in tea, coffee and hot chocolate can be replaced with rice milk and tastes more creamy.
- “Bürgen” bread now stocked in most supermarkets was developed in Australia and contains 12% soya and 10% linseeds. It tastes really good and can help reduce nausea during chemotherapy and the side effects of tamoxifen.

**Barbara T**

**Dairy-free is great!**

I am writing to thank you yet again for your “INFORM magazine”. Your reader's letters about “The Plant Programme” were so interesting that I bought both books myself and have now changed over to the dairy free diet mainly just to see if I could actually “live” without my cup of tea! The answer is “Yes!” As an alternative I have found the lemon Green Tea to be wonderful and don't miss the dairy kind at all! I have found that the change over is very easy to make and for me, (I didn't particularly like food before), has made a drastic change to my taste for food.

I have been trying many, many things I have never tasted before and I am now eating so much more variety and am actually enjoying cooking! My sister who has always been such a good cook can't believe the difference!

So just to encourage others – it's not a daunting task to change from dairy and you may find, instead of a limitation, that it actually stimulates your interest in food. We can have food now from all over the world and I am at last “tasting and enjoying” what God has provided!

Thanks again for the gorgeous undies and for the wonderful support of your excellent magazine. I would be interested to hear from any of your readers who have had lymphoedema whose arm has returned to its normal size.

**Jo L**

## Living in Fear

Overcoming the fear of recurrence

**Your treatment is over, and your life is finally back to normal. You look fine, and you feel good physically. Everyone else is relieved that the worst is behind you. So why are you so scared now?**

**It's not uncommon to feel anxiety when treatment for breast cancer stops. One of the biggest fears you may face during this period is that you will have a recurrence of your cancer. Little aches and pains that you barely would have noticed before suddenly seem to take on huge significance.**

**American psychotherapist and author, Ronnie Kaye, gives advice on overcoming the fear of recurrence.**

There are three little words every woman wants to hear after being diagnosed and treated for breast cancer. *You are cured!* These days, doctors seem reluctant to say that. Instead, they tell us about statistics and survival rates, and they use the word *remission* instead of *cure*. Often, women do not find that information especially reassuring. Even when a woman hears that she has a 95% chance of cancer-free survival over a ten-year period, she may wonder if she is one of the 5% who won't survive, and how much less than 10 years she might have left to live.

This kind of reaction is very normal. Sometimes, however, the fears get out of hand. They become so large that they take over your life. You may find yourself afraid or anxious a great deal of the time, hopeless about the future, and unwilling to reinvest in life and the possibility that breast cancer might come back is like a dark cloud that settles over everything.

If experiencing these fears is interfering with your life, here are some suggestions for moving beyond them:

**Understand the truth about worrying:** There is a lot of talk these days about the power of imagery and how it can promote healing. Oddly enough, worry is also a form of imagery. The whole idea of imagery is that you can create a picture, an idea, or a feeling in your mind which you then experience as real. That is exactly what worry is! Your mind is focused on a possibility—something that has not yet occurred, and may never occur in the future—and you are experiencing it as if it were a certainty. While no one can deny that recurrence is a possibility after a breast cancer diagnosis, it is important to balance that fact with the other possibility—that you will remain cancer-free and live happily and well. Make a resolution to spend at least as much time developing positive and hopeful images in your mind as you do worrying. Strive for balance, and you will feel the fear begin to lessen.

**Ask yourself the right question:** When women are consumed with the fear of recurrence, they keep asking themselves, "What if I die?" If instead you start asking, "What if I live?" you may be surprised at how quickly your focus shifts from the worst possible outcome to the best.

**Get practical and get busy:** There are so many things that you can do after your

treatment is over which can improve your overall health and boost your immune system. Start exploring areas such as nutrition, stress reduction, imagery, meditation, Chinese medicine, acupuncture, exercise, energy, work, and homeopathy. You may also want to investigate support groups and individual counselling. Feeling better emotionally can have a very positive impact on the state of your health. Develop a program and stick to it so that you can feel you are doing your best to support and heal your body.

**Explore your fears:** The fear of recurrence is really a complex issue, which includes the fear of death and dying. This is an area that most people in our culture are reluctant to explore, and so they deprive themselves of a wonderful opportunity to grow emotionally and spiritually. Take advantage of the opportunity, and you will find the results not only life-altering but life-enhancing as well. You might want to find a spiritual or religious counsellor, join a group of people who are also interested in these issues, or choose from the wealth of fascinating books on the subject.

**Celebrate mortality:** Many times, a breast cancer diagnosis is a woman's first confrontation with her own mortality. Somehow, she blames breast cancer for making her mortal. The truth is that all human beings are born mortal. However, there are many people who have not been diagnosed with a life-threatening illness and who seem unaware of their own mortality. It is really the *awareness* of our own mortality that we find distressing. But you can use that awareness to enrich your life. Knowing that no one lives forever, examine the choices you have been making in life, and start making better ones. Do more of what you always wanted to do, and say "no" more often to things that don't make you happy. Pay more attention to love and friendship and keep important relationships in your life clean and well-nurtured. As you do this, you will find that your focus gradually shifts from the future and the fear of recurrence to the present and the way to invest fully in life.

**Ronnie Kaye is a well-known American psychotherapist, two-time breast cancer survivor and best-selling author of "Spinning Straw into Gold: Your Emotional Recovery from Breast Cancer" Publisher: Simon & Schuster Books, ISBN: 0671701649 (paperback) £7.99. Available from [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk)**