

## A Must for the Bust!

Breasts are one of the most recognizable symbols of womanhood. Though their primary biological purpose may be for breastfeeding, they play a large role as a symbol of sexuality and for some even a source of power. Many women will empty their savings account and risk their lives to have "bigger and better" breasts, and breast augmentation has now surpassed liposuction to become the #1 cosmetic surgery in the country!

At the same time, breast cancer is now the most common cancer affecting women. In addition to the hundreds of thousands of women diagnosed with breast cancer each year, an estimated 1 million may be undiagnosed, due to lack of medical coverage and false negative or insufficient screening tests. The current likelihood of a woman developing breast cancer in her lifetime is approximately 1 in 8, yet our typical approach is only a defensive one...i.e. wait until the cancer occurs.

So what is the best way to protect our breasts? Recent discussion about recommended screening guidelines and confusion about hormone replacement therapies have left many practitioners and patients puzzled about the best approach to take. Sufficient screening is important, but we don't have to wait for cancer to show itself before we take action!.

A simple breast health plan should incorporate the following three items at the very least:

**D - Vitamin D** deficiency is literally an epidemic, as an estimated 75-90% of the population has insufficient levels. Vitamin D binds to specific receptors in just about every cell in the body and modulates transcription of genetic material. The effects of vitamin D include the promotion of cellular differentiation and apoptosis (programmed cell death) as well as the down regulation of cellular proliferation.

**I - Breast tissue** is the second most concentrated place we should find iodine in the body. Iodine can regulate hormone metabolism as well induce apoptosis, disrupt proliferation and regulate differentiation. The average dietary intake of iodine in Japan is approximately 13.8 mg/day (compared with less than 1000 micrograms in this country) and the Japanese have one of the lowest breast cancer rates in the world! Furthermore, iodine is one of the most effective treatments for breast pain and fibrocystic breast changes.

**P - Progesterone** is needed to balance the proliferative effects of estrogen and has been shown repeatedly in studies to decrease cellular proliferation of breast cells when given alone or in conjunction with estradiol. And yes, this effect is especially true in women with a history of "progesterone receptor positive" breast cancer!