

## NATURAL HEALTH PRODUCTS AND BREAST CANCER

Many natural health products claim to be beneficial to patients with breast cancer. However, there is little reliable evidence to support these claims, so deciding whether or not to use them is difficult. The following information is intended to help you become aware of which products to avoid.

Some natural health products are promoted for reducing hot flushes and other menopause-like symptoms. These products frequently contain phytoestrogens. Phytoestrogens are compounds found in plants, which have estrogenic activity. While the way they work is not clearly understood, there is a possible risk that phytoestrogens may encourage the growth of some breast cancer cells. Phytoestrogens may also interfere with hormone type medications used to treat breast cancer. These include tamoxifen and aromatase inhibitors (anastrozole, letrozole, or exemestane).

The table below lists some natural health products that are known phytoestrogens. This list is not inclusive, and only contains the more commonly used products. Many of these ingredients may be found in combination products and no brand names have been used.

It is suggested that, if you have a history of estrogen responsive breast cancer, you avoid the following **supplements or natural products in the form of pills, tablets, capsules, powders, etc.** You should always check with your healthcare provider before taking any supplements or natural products.

Natural Health Products With Known Estrogenic Activity			
Aletris	Chasteberry	Hops	Resveratrol
Alfalfa	DHEA	Hu-Zhang	Sage
Androstenedione	Dong Quai	Ipriflavone	Scarlet Pimpernel
Anise	Epimedium	Kudzu	Soy Supplements
Asparagus racemosus	Evening Primrose Oil	Lavender	Star Anise
Beta-sitosterols	Fennel	Licorice	Tangeretin
Bitter Melon	Flaxseed	Milk Thistle	Tea Tree Oil
Black Cohosh	Fo-ti	Pleurisy root	Turmeric/ Curcumin
Black Currant	German Chamomile	Pomegranate seeds	Wild Carrot
Bladderwrack	Ginseng (all types)	Pregnenolone	Wild Yam
Boron	Guggul	Raspberry Leaf	
Burdock		Red Clover	

Remember, the list refers to supplements. **You do not need to omit the food items from your diet.**

Flaxseeds and soy products (tofu, soybeans, edamame, soy milk) may be consumed in moderation. Dietary limits recommended by the Dietitians of Canada Association and the BC Cancer Agency are as follows:

- Flaxseed (ground) – 1 to 2 TBSP per day
- Soy – 2 servings a day (1 serving = 1 cup soy milk, ½ cup tofu or ½ cup soybeans)

**If you have any questions, concerns or require further information about your medications, please contact a health care provider at your cancer centre.**

Cross Cancer Institute – (780) 432-8771, Tom Baker Cancer Centre – (403) 521-3764  
Central Alberta Cancer Centre – (403) 343-4802, Grande Prairie Cancer Centre – (780) 538-7288  
Jack Ady Cancer Centre – (403) 388-6800, Margery E. Yuill Cancer Centre 403-529-8817

OR

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*Disclaimer: This leaflet is only a brief summary about natural products and breast cancer. It does NOT include all information about the warnings, precautions, interactions, side effects, or risks that may apply. This does not replace information you receive from your healthcare provider.*