Research Saves Lives

Maintaining a healthy weight makes a difference when it comes to breast cancer:

- Being obese or overweight after menopause can increase your risk of breast cancer by as much as 30-60 percent.
- Being overweight or gaining weight after breast cancer diagnosis may increase the risk of cancer coming back (recurrence).
- Breast cancer survivors who are overweight tend to have a lower survival rate and quality of life.

Still, the link between extra weight and breast cancer is complicated and affected by other factors. For example, the location of the extra weight matters. Extra fat around the belly area may increase risk more than the same amount of extra fat around the thighs or hips. In addition, weight affects the risk for pre- and postmenopausal women differently.

Exercise is one way to help maintain a healthy weight, though the benefits of exercise go beyond just weight loss. Women who get regular exercise may have a lower risk of getting breast cancer, a better chance of surviving breast cancer and a lower risk of having cancer recur. Regular exercise can also increase positive mood and improve physical condition, which in turn can enhance quality of life.

Learn more about obesity and breast cancer [link]

Our Research Investment

More than $37 million in 60 research grants and more than 25 clinical trials focused on obesity, weight and exercise

What We’re Investigating

- Determining how obesity increases the risk of developing breast cancer and whether weight loss can decrease this risk
- Studying how obesity causes inflammation and contributes to the development of aggressive or drug-resistant breast cancers or causes recurrence of breast cancer
- Identifying the genetic and behavioral factors that contribute to the higher rates (disparities) of obesity and breast cancer mortality in African-American women

What We’ve Learned from Komen-funded research

- Drugs used to treat diabetes such as metformin may also help prevent breast cancer in some overweight or obese women.
- Exercise such as weight training or yoga may help breast cancer survivors reduce their body fat or improve their quality of life by reducing side effects of treatment, like fatigue or insomnia.
- Diabetes appears to increase the risk of developing and dying from breast cancer, especially in obese women (BMI greater than 30).

Read more about targeting obesity to prevent breast cancer from Komen-funded researchers at the University of Colorado Cancer Center, in Komen’s Science Buzz series [link]