



BREAST CANCER MYTHS AND TRUTHS

Breast cancer is serious, and in South Africa, around 1 in every 31 women will develop it in their lifetime. Therefore, it is no surprise that there is a lot of fear around the topic. Nearly everyone with email access has seen warnings about supposed risks, which include using antiperspirant deodorant and wearing under-wired bras, but how much of this is really true?

THE BIG DEODORANT QUESTION

The good news is there is no need to stop using antiperspirants or deodorant. There is no scientific evidence to support the claim that antiperspirant chemicals are absorbed through the skin, block the release of toxins when you sweat, and cause these toxins to build up in the breast. Even the strongest antiperspirant does not completely block sweat, and if it did, sweating is not the most efficient way of getting rid of toxins. Most cancer-causing substances are filtered by the kidneys and released through urine or processed by the liver.



FRAGRANCE DANGER



There are also email claims floating around to suggest that chemicals, such as phthalates and parabens used in fragrances, may also be absorbed from the body and contribute to a higher breast cancer risk. To date, there have been no scientific studies to confirm any relationship, so do not throw out your perfume.

WHAT ABOUT UNDERWIRED BRAS?

Most women complain about uncomfortable bras at some point, and then there are those emails talking about underwire bras blocking the drainage of lymph fluid from the bottom of the breast. However, what is the truth?

A well-fitting bra is important for your personal comfort, and that is it. The consensus is that neither the type of bra you wear nor the tightness of your underwear or other clothing has any connection to breast cancer risk.



WHAT IF I HAVE HAD A BREAST INJURY?



There is also no evidence to support a link between breast cancer and a breast injury – like being hit by a flying hockey ball at school.

WHAT ARE THE REAL RISKS?

Many people think breast cancer is all about inheriting bad genes, but the reality is that only 20-30% of women have a family history of the disease. One thing you can do to reduce your risk, is to reduce the risks you have control over. This means:

1. Maintaining a healthy weight for your height/activity levels
2. Staying active
3. Stopping smoking and reducing the amount of alcohol you drink

Big or small, treat your breasts as your greatest assets, and look after them!



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Let us stay mindful of caring for one another and ourselves