



Natural Health Products and Breast Cancer

There are many natural health products which claim to be of benefit to patients with breast cancer. However, there is very little reliable evidence to support these claims, so deciding whether or not to use them is difficult. If you decide to use a natural health product, the following information is intended to help breast cancer patients 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 a group of chemicals found in plants which have estrogenic activity. While the way they work is not clearly understood, there is a theoretical 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 the aromatase inhibitors (anastrozole, letrozole & exemestane).

Natural Health Products With Known Estrogenic Activity		
Aletris	DHEA	Milk Thistle
Alfalfa	Dong Quai	Raspberry Leaf
Anise	Evening Primrose Oil	Red Clover
Beta-sitosterols	Ginseng (all types)	Resveratrol
Bitter Melon	Fennel	Scarlet Pimpernel
Black Cohosh	Flaxseed	Soy Supplements
Blue Cohosh	Hops	Tangeretin
Chasteberry	Licorice	Wild Yam

The table above lists some of the natural health products which are known phytoestrogens. Since this list only contains the more common products and no brand names have been used, you should check with your doctor, pharmacist or nurse before taking any natural products.

For more information see:

www.albertabreast.com

www.bccancer.bc.ca