



# Vanishing Cancers

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**A** common belief about cancer is that it is an irreversible process. Normal cells become malignant and grow uncontrollably. The only way to stop the process is to remove or kill the cancer through surgery, chemotherapy and/or radiation. Cancer doesn't just disappear.

That belief is proving to be untrue. In a recent study in *Archives of Internal Medicine*, researchers from Norway and the US analyzed the six-year incidence of invasive breast cancer in two very similar groups of Norwegian women.



About 119,000 of the women had mammograms every two years. Another 110,000 women in the study had not had mammograms and then had one mammogram.

To the surprise of the researchers, the six-year incidence of breast cancer in the two groups was quite different. The more frequently screened group had a 22% *higher* incidence of breast cancer.

So, what caused less cancer to be found in the second group? The intriguing theory is that cancer did indeed start in this group at an equal rate... and then spontaneously disappeared without ever being noticed (because the women were not being screened).

Other research has shown that spontaneous regression of cancer occurs in cases of advanced melanoma, advanced kidney cancer and *neuroblastoma* (a childhood cancer of nerve tissue). Regression also occurs in *colonic adenomas* (precancerous growths of the colon) and in precancerous lesions of the cervix.

*Bottom Line/Personal* interviewed Keith I. Block, MD, one of America's top integrative cancer therapy experts. He explains that the number of documented cases of spontaneous cancer remission is quite low. He estimates that only one in 500 cancer tumors regress without surgery, chemotherapy or radiation.

However, he suggests that the unalterable, one-way trajectory of cancer is an outdated paradigm.

Cancer is not only *mutagenic* -- propelled by damage to DNA -- it also is *mitogenic* and the growth (*mitogenesis*) of cancer cells may be stopped by inhibiting molecular signaling and correcting disruption in the body's internal biochemical environment. This can be influenced by lifestyle factors that are alterable through personal choices.

## WHY CANCERS VANISH

There are three main factors that can cause a cancer to regress...

■ **Innate biology.** Some people are born with a naturally stronger constitution that is capable of stopping a cancer before it takes firm hold.

■ **Transformation of the body's biochemical and molecular environment.** Many lifestyle factors influence the body's inner biochemical and molecular environment, including what you eat, how much you exercise and how much stress you're under.

The latest research shows that positive lifestyle factors can influence genes by turning on the tumor-suppressor genes and turning off the tumor-promoting genes.

■ **Better communication.** This includes two types of communication -- biochemical communication between cells and emotional communication with yourself and others.

**What happens:** In a normal biochemical environment, one cell sends a message to another, *Don't grow, I'm using this space.* One reason tumor cells can divide and grow is that they don't receive this message.

The breakdown in communication is fundamental in the biology of cancer in other ways. Studies show that meditation -- one way to communicate with your inner spirit -- reduces cancer-causing inflammation.

Close personal relationships also are relevant. A 2009 preclinical study from researchers at The University of Chicago suggested that social isolation and its impact on stress resulted in a greater than threefold increase in the onset of breast cancer.

## STEPS YOU CAN TAKE

Various lifestyle factors can strengthen you against cancer...

■ **Exercise and fitness.** Numerous studies link increased physical activity to lower incidence of cancers of the colon, lung, prostate, testicles, breast, ovaries and uterus.

Exercise counters many cancer-causing biological factors, including cancer-fueling molecules called *growth factors*... oxidative stress (a kind of internal rust)... a weakened immune system... and poor response to inflammation. Aim for a minimum of 30 minutes of aerobic exercise daily, which can be divided into multiple sessions.

■ **Whole-foods diet.** The right diet deprives a tumor of the compounds it most likes to feed on and supplies you with nutrients that help your body keep malignant cells in check.

**Example:** The Japanese have long had a diet rich in land and sea vegetables and fish -- and

low in meat, refined sugars and high-fat foods. Japan also has lower cancer rates than the US and better survival rates. For instance, men in Japan and the US are equally likely to have very early prostate cancer -- the kind that never causes clinical problems -- but American men have much higher rates of the clinical type that can lead to advanced prostate cancer.

**Bottom line:** If you eat too much dietary fat and refined carbohydrates, you run the risk of increasing body fat and weight while weakening your immune system and increasing oxidative stress, inflammation and blood levels of substances that promote tumors.

■ **Power foods.** There are "power foods" rich in phytochemicals that are uniquely anticancer. These include turmeric... grapes (with the phytochemical *resveratrol*)... green tea... milk thistle... ginger... and pomegranate.

But to get enough turmeric, resveratrol and all the rest, you would have to eat curry and guzzle grape juice until you exploded.

**Best:** Supplements and concentrates, such as "green drinks," often sold in health-food stores. Talk to your doctor about the best supplements for you.

■ **Stress reduction.** Chronic anxiety and stress contribute to cancer's ability to thrive in your body.

**What happens:** Stress triggers biochemistry that is procancer -- high levels of certain growth factors... an excess of oxidation-causing free radicals... high blood sugar... and raging inflammation.

Techniques such as relaxed abdominal breathing, progressive muscle relaxation and calming imagery can help you create emotional ease.

## IF YOU HAVE CANCER

The fact that a cancer can vanish without conventional treatments is important knowledge for a person diagnosed with cancer and for his/her doctor. However, a patient should never simply wait for a cancer to disappear. Getting started quickly on a plan of care can be essential for one's survival -- losing time can be detrimental, even life-threatening.