**Reducing Shared Risks: Breast Cancer, Cardiovascular Disease, and Food Insecurity**

Breast cancer and cardiovascular diseases (CVD) greatly affect women in the United States. Consider this:

* Breast cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer in American women, with more than 300,000 women receiving a breast cancer diagnosis each year, including <xx> in <name of state> alone.[[1]](#footnote-1)
* Heart diseases, also called CVD, are the leading cause of death among American women, and <xx> people die of CVD in <name of state> each year.[[2]](#footnote-2)
* The risk of CVD is 42% higher in cancer survivors, and rates of CVD are especially high among breast cancer survivors.[[3]](#footnote-3)

For all of their differences, breast cancer and CVD are intertwined diseases. They share many modifiable risk factors, such as obesity, diet, and smoking. Inflammation and the conditions that cause it (e.g., high blood pressure, high cholesterol, high blood sugar) contribute to both breast cancer and CVD.[[4]](#footnote-4)Some breast cancer treatments are associated with increased cardiovascular risk.[[5]](#footnote-5) Because there are more than 4 million American women who are breast cancer survivors, addressing health *after* cancer can make a big impact in reducing cancer recurrence and the risk of developing new or worsening CVD.[[6]](#footnote-6)

Fortunately, there are actions that can be taken to reduce the risk of breast cancer and heart disease. Not using commercial tobacco products, maintaining a normal weight, and exercising are useful, along with another key action: eating a healthy diet, rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins. Additionally, by reducing cardiovascular disease risks in people at high risk of breast cancer before a breast cancer diagnosis, we can help prevent complications after diagnosis and treatment.

Unfortunately, not everyone has the access or the means to eat a healthy diet. In the United States, an estimated 17% of Americans live in low-income areas with low access to supermarkets.[[7]](#footnote-7) In <name of state>, <xx>% of households experience food insecurity.[[8]](#footnote-8) Food insecurity often intersects with other social determinants of health (SDOH), like income. People with lower incomes have a higher risk of CVD, highlighting the importance of programs that support sustained access to healthy foods.[[9]](#footnote-9) Women’s utilization of breast cancer screening decreases as their number of adverse SDOH increases, indicating that addressing SDOH will likely also improve breast cancer outcomes.[[10]](#footnote-10)

**How Can We Promote Heart Health for Cancer Survivors in Our Community?**

Our community can support breast cancer survivors as they lower their risks of CVD, in part by ensuring access to healthy foods. For instance, the [Food is Medicine](https://health.gov/our-work/nutrition-physical-activity/food-medicine) movement advocates for improved access to healthy foods as a means to prevent and treat chronic diseases. Additionally, some states are testing Medicaid coverage of a variety of nutrition services.[[11]](#footnote-11) In <name of state>, we have implemented <name of program>, which <short description of program>.

From a policy perspective, we can further support breast cancer survivors’ access to healthy foods by

* Advocating for the expansion of food is medicine and food prescription programs in our state, including through Medicaid coverage,
* Supporting local programs that provide access to healthy foods, and
* Promoting [policies](https://www.feedingamerica.org/take-action/advocate/policy-recommendations) that will help address food insecurity in our community.

In addition to policy considerations, we can also improve heart health for breast cancer survivors in our community by ensuring that survivors have

1. Regular access to healthy foods, and
2. The tools to create healthy eating habits.

To ensure survivors in our community have access to healthy foods, we recommend

* [insert example here]
* [insert example here]

To improve heart health in breast cancer survivors, we recommend

* [insert example here]
* [insert example here]

We are committed to improving the heart health of breast cancer survivors in <name of state>. By providing the assistance and resources that survivors may need to access and implement a heart healthy diet, we can improve the lives of the thousands of breast cancer survivors in our state together.

Food Insecurity Resources

* Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) [Food and Food System Resources](https://www.cdc.gov/nutrition/resources-publications/food-and-food-system-resources-during-covid-19-pandemic.html)
* U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) [Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations](https://www.fns.usda.gov/fdpir/food-distribution-program-indian-reservations)
* USDA’s [SNAP Eligibility](https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/recipient/eligibility)
* Feeding America’s [Free Food and Resources](https://www.feedingamerica.org/our-work/hunger-relief-programs)
* Feeding America’s [Mobile Pantry Locator](https://www.feedingamerica.org/our-work/hunger-relief-programs/mobile-food-pantry-program)
* Feeding America’s [Food Insecurity Among Overall (All Ages) Population in the United States Map](https://map.feedingamerica.org/)
* FoodFinder’s [Interactive Map](https://foodfinder.us/)
* United Way’s [211 Program](https://www.unitedway.org/our-impact/featured-programs/2-1-1)

Nutrition Access Support After Cancer Resources

* Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics’ [Find a Nutrition Expert](https://www.eatright.org/find-a-nutrition-expert)
* CDC’s [Eating Healthy Information](https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/survivors/healthy-living-guides/physical-health/eating-healthy.htm)
* Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center’s (MSKCC) [Nutrition and Breast Cancer: Making Healthy Diet Decisions Guide](https://www.mskcc.org/cancer-care/patient-education/nutrition-and-breast-making-healthy-diet-decisions)
* MSKCC’s [Food to Overcome Outcome Disparities Program](https://www.mskcc.org/departments/psychiatry-behavioral-sciences/immigrant-health/addressing-socioeconomic-determinants-health/food-overcome-outcome-disparities)
* Stanford Medicine’s [Nutrition Services for Cancer Patients](https://stanfordhealthcare.org/medical-clinics/cancer-nutrition-services.html)
* Giant Food’s [Healthier Together: Food as Medicine Resources](https://giantfood.com/pages/healthier-together)
* American Heart Association’s [Recipes](https://recipes.heart.org/en)
* Meals on Wheels’ [Find a Meals on Wheels Provider Near You](https://www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/find-meals)
* Administration for Community Living Nutrition and Aging Resource Center’s [Medically Tailored Meals](https://acl.gov/senior-nutrition/medically-tailored-meals)

Additional Resources:

* CDC’s [National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program](https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/nbccedp/screenings.htm)

National Cancer Institute’s [Cancer Support Services Directory](https://supportorgs.cancer.gov/home.aspx?js=1)

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