

Dressed to Kill The link Between Cancer and Bras

Imagine shopping for a bra, and finding that the small label on the back contained the words, "Warning: Wearing Bras May Cause Breast Cancer." It's ridiculous, you say. How can an article of clothing as seemingly innocuous as a bra have any relationship to disease?

Having reached cultural-icon status, bras are rarely viewed as anything less than a feminine necessity, an object of womanhood, and an anchor for fashion. They make you think about Madonna, not about mastectomy. They create cleavage, not cancer.

But as you shall learn, bras are more than objects of fashion. They transform more than appearance. For women, breasts rate as one of the most important features of their bodies. This bias is no doubt emphasized by our society's preoccupation with breasts. Styles of women's clothing, from underwear to nightgowns to bathing suits to business suits, focus on breasts and the bustline. Breasts are truly an obsession. Ironically, this obsession with breasts may be a root cause of cancer.

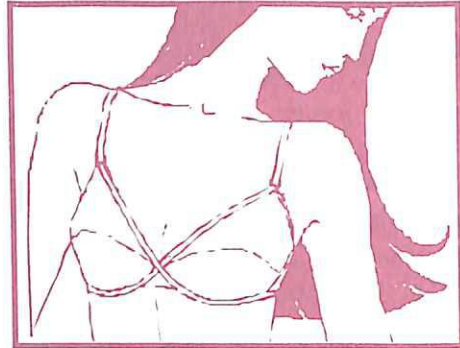
THE LYMPHATIC SYSTEM

The cancer connection is that bras may have an effect on the lymphatic system. The lymphatic system is part of the immune system which cleanses the body of toxins. The general course of events in the body is that the bloodstream shuttles blood to the lungs, liver, and kidneys for cleansing and rejuvenation. This cleansing of the tissues occurs constantly and is essential to maintaining the health and integrity of the body's tissues.

THE CANCER CONNECTION

If a woman wears a close-fitting garment, such as a bra, it may cause moderate but not severe constriction of the breast tissue. Signs of this could be indentations or red marks on the skin beneath the breasts, or other indications of irritation. There may not be much pain, since the tissue is getting blood and fresh oxygen. However, there would be some swelling of the tissue, although this may not be apparent in soft, fatty tissue such as that of the breast.

When you consider the lymphatic drainage of the breasts, it seems plausible that the armpit lymph nodes and the lymphatics leading to them are constricted by a bra. The drainage to the breastbone lymph nodes may also be hampered, particularly by bras that have underwires. In short, the immune system of the breast is being hampered in its job by the bra.



DRESS FOR HEALTH

Are we saying that all cancers could be caused by clothing? Of course not! Tight clothing may simply serve as a handicap to our immune system because of its effect on the lymphatic system. In combination with other noxious stimuli and events, such as toxins, stress, poor diet, and so forth, the construction of our bodies by clothing can set up a protracted process of degeneration, possibly leading to cancer.

THE CONFORMING BRAST

One excellent course of action for most women is to reduce the time the bra is worn each day. Wearing a bra for less than 12 hours daily seems to be extremely protective against breast cancer. Put on your bra as late as possible before going out, and remove it as soon as you return home.

Do not wear a bra to sleep! As suggested by the Bra and Breast Cancer Study, wearing a bra to sleep is the riskiest lifestyle behavior of all. For most women, at night is the only time that breast tissues get a much-needed rest from constriction. So take off your bra before going to sleep and, if you do wear clothes in bed, select only loose-fitting garments.

Perhaps just as important as the amount of time the bra is worn is the construction and fit of the bra. When shopping for one, keep in mind that the more a bra tries to shape your breasts, the more pressure it will apply to the breast tissue. Therefore, try to avoid bras with underwires or other stiff breast-shaping components.

[Excerpts from *Dressed to Kill* by Sydney Ross Singer and Soma Grismaijer @ 1995 Avery Publishing]

Source: *The Healthy Options News Digest*, March/April 1997