

High-Fat Diets Increase Breast Cancer Risk and Metastasis

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STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- › Eating a high-fat diet (defined as 60% of daily calories) significantly increases your risk of developing breast cancer and accelerates the disease's spread throughout your body
- › High-fat foods activate your platelets, making them overly sticky, which helps cancer cells attach and grow rapidly in vital organs like your lungs
- › Unhealthy fats, commonly found in processed foods and fast food, trigger harmful inflammation and hormonal imbalances that directly fuel breast cancer
- › Making simple dietary shifts, such as cutting down on processed foods and vegetable oils, dramatically reduces your breast cancer risk and supports healthier cell function
- › Regularly choosing whole, nutrient-dense foods and healthy carbohydrates helps your body lower inflammation, balance hormones, and create an environment less conducive to cancer growth

Breast cancer, characterized by lumps in the breast, unexplained swelling, skin changes, and sometimes persistent pain, remains the second most common cancer among women worldwide. In the U.S. alone, the American Cancer Society estimates that 316,950 women will be diagnosed with this disease in 2025.¹

While it's commonly believed that breast cancer occurs due to factors such as gene mutations or inherited genes, research shows that there's one alarming factor that dramatically influences risk — your diet. Specifically, eating a diet excessively high in fat.

A High-Fat Diet Makes Cancer Spread Faster

A study published in Nature Communications² explored how a high-fat diet speeds up the spread of breast cancer, particularly focusing on the role played by platelets, which are blood cells involved in clotting. Specifically, the researchers set out to determine the link between 60% of calories as fat and faster cancer metastasis (the spreading of cancer cells) into the lungs.

- **A high-fat diet had a significant effect on platelet activation** – Platelets in mice fed a diet consisting of 60% fat did not behave normally. They became excessively sticky and aggressive, and began forming clumps, especially in the lung tissues.
- **Aggressive platelets didn't just randomly cluster** – These cells specifically released a protein called fibronectin, which significantly enhances the cancer cells' ability to stick to blood vessels. Fibronectin acts like glue, providing cancer cells with a firm grip onto blood vessel walls.

Without fibronectin, cancer cells would struggle to latch onto the blood vessels in the lungs, severely limiting their potential to invade and spread. But when fibronectin levels are elevated, as it happens with high-fat diets, cancer cells easily attach, survive, and rapidly proliferate in new areas.

- **Fibronectin damages cellular health** – To confirm how pivotal fibronectin was, the researchers conducted an additional test – they blocked fibronectin's action. In doing so, they dramatically slowed cancer spread, emphasizing how damaging a high-fat diet can be by ramping up fibronectin production.
- **Reversing the harmful effects is doable** – When the researchers switched the test mice from a high-fat diet back to a normal one, they noticed a significant reduction in platelet activation and cancer spread.

The change didn't take long, showing that dietary adjustments provide rapid and powerful protection against metastasis. It's a convincing reason to take immediate action, especially if you're constantly consuming high-fat meals.

- **Blood coagulation provides a clue to cancer risk** – Another observation was related to blood coagulation times. Blood from the animals on high-fat diets coagulated faster – a change that accurately predicted worse outcomes. Essentially, faster blood-clotting indicates platelet hyperactivity, making your bloodstream a more hospitable environment for cancer cells.

By monitoring blood clotting times, health care providers can identify individuals at greater risk of aggressive cancer spread due to dietary factors, enabling earlier and more targeted interventions.

- **The mechanism of platelet hyperactivation is closely linked to dietary fats** – As noted earlier, activated platelets secrete high amounts of fibronectin, setting the stage for cancer metastasis by enhancing cancer cell adhesion to the blood vessels and lung tissues. But there's another mechanism at play – they also shield cancer cells from your immune system.

Normally, your immune cells patrol your bloodstream, identifying and eliminating rogue cancer cells. However, these clumped platelets form a protective barrier around cancer cells, making them practically invisible to immune surveillance. As a result, cancer cells survive longer, multiply rapidly, and spread more efficiently throughout your body.

- **Obesity compounds the risks of a high-fat diet** – According to the researchers, having excess weight worsens the metastasis:

"As well as affecting primary BC [breast cancer] tumor growth, obesity enhances the metastasis of these cells to the lungs in a manner that is dependent on neutrophils, involving vascular dysfunction and increased endothelial transmigration of the tumor cells.

Moreover, obesity also induces chronic inflammation, while enhancing pro-thrombotic signaling in both platelets and endothelial cells, and promoting a state of hypercoagulability in cancer patients."

Other Research Supports the Link Between Fat Intake and Higher Breast Cancer Risk

In a similar study published in *Cureus*,³ researchers conducted a meta-analysis to determine whether diets high in fat directly influence the risk of breast cancer in women. They chose eight studies from various countries, that involved large and diverse sample sizes, ranging from groups as small as 172 up to 91,779 people.

Each of the selected studies measured dietary fat intake among participants using food questionnaires and tracked breast cancer diagnoses through medical records confirmed by histology or radiological methods. Just like the *Nature Communications* study, the findings were clear for this one – high dietary fat significantly increased the risk of developing breast cancer.

- **High polyunsaturated fat (PUF) intake is harmful** – The study identified PUFs, particularly omega-6, as particularly detrimental. As noted by the researchers:

"[O]verall caloric intake has a larger impact on the development of obesity, which is linked to redox and hormonal abnormalities that promote tumor proliferation ...

[E]xcess oxidative stresses may activate many transcription factors, including those that control the expression of genes implicated in pro-inflammatory pathways. The effect of polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFAs) on cancer risk has been shown to depend on the ratio of -6 to -3 PUFAs. In vivo findings demonstrated that -6 PUFAs stimulate tumor development, while -3 PUFAs are protective."

- **Timing and duration of fat consumption influence cancer risk** – Researchers noted that consistent consumption of high-fat foods over several years markedly amplified the risk. In other words, prolonged exposure to these dietary fats created cumulative damage, increasing the likelihood of breast cancer diagnosis later in life.

- **The underlying biological mechanisms of fat intake on cancer** – Excess fat consumption elevates your body's levels of harmful substances called reactive oxygen species (ROS). These are unstable molecules that cause oxidative stress in cells, leading directly to DNA damage and cancerous changes.

Chronic oxidative stress doesn't just damage individual cells – it sets off a chain reaction of inflammatory reactions, activating genes known to drive breast cancer growth.

- **High intake of unhealthy fats disrupts hormone levels** – The researchers noted that excess body fat tissue actively produces estrogen, and elevated estrogen levels strongly correlate with breast cancer development, especially in postmenopausal women. The estrogenic activity accelerates breast cell growth. Thus, consuming high-fat diets also indirectly amplifies the body's own hormonal environment.

Just like the previous study, this research makes it clear that the amount of fat you put on your plate each day influences your risk of breast cancer. Reducing dietary fats, particularly those that trigger chronic inflammation and hormone imbalances, like omega-6 fats will improve your risk of developing breast cancer.

Reduce Your Breast Cancer Risk by Changing Your Diet

To reduce your risk of breast cancer, addressing the root cause – your diet – is necessary. As shown in the studies, eating a high-fat diet sets the stage for inflammation, hormone imbalances, and aggressive cancer growth.

I recommend you take immediate action today to reverse the risks mentioned and build a healthier future. Here are my five strategies that will set you on the right path:

1. **Cut back on linoleic acid** – Linoleic acid (LA) is a harmful type of fat commonly found in vegetable oils and processed foods, as it promotes inflammation that fuels cancer growth. Start checking labels carefully and avoid foods containing soybean oil, corn oil, sunflower oil, safflower oil, and ultraprocessed foods.

Choose healthier fats like grass fed butter, ghee, or tallow instead, as these fats do not contribute to inflammation and help protect your cellular health. For more information on how LA causes cellular damage, read my article "[Linoleic Acid – The Most Destructive Ingredient in Your Diet.](#)"

- 2. Moderate your fat intake** – As the earlier research noted, high levels of fat are strongly linked to breast cancer, but completely eliminating fat is neither realistic nor healthy – the key is moderation. Aim for dietary balance, because your body still needs fat to function properly.

For metabolic efficiency, aim for a daily fat intake of about 30% of daily calories, and ensure they come from healthy sources, including full-fat raw dairy, which is a primary source of the [essential odd-chained fat C15:0](#). [Glucose is the preferred fuel for your cells](#), so those should make up the bulk (45% to 55%) of your calories.

- 3. Switch to whole, nutrient-dense foods** – If you're regularly eating processed or fried foods, now's the right time to make a change. Swap out processed meals and snacks for natural, nutrient-dense whole foods.

Good choices include fresh vegetables, fruits, pasture-raised meats, wild-caught seafood, pastured eggs, and raw, grass fed dairy. These foods provide essential nutrients that support your immune system and promote optimal health.

- 4. Optimize your carb intake for healthy cells** – Your cells rely heavily on carbohydrates for energy, [so severely restricting carbs is not a good idea](#). Instead, choose healthy carbohydrates to fuel cellular energy without triggering inflammation.

Whole fruits (with pulp), cooked root vegetables, and easily digestible sources like white rice will provide stable, beneficial carbohydrates. These carbs support balanced hormone levels and reduce the oxidative stress that feeds cancer growth.

5. Get regular exercise — Supporting your healthy diet by adding regular exercise is an effective way to protect your health against cancer. Research shows that higher muscle strength and cardiovascular fitness reduced all-cause mortality by 31% to 46% across different cancer types and stages.⁴

Now, what kind of exercises are good for you? The best, and easiest one, you can do right away is go for a walk outside — aim for 10,000 steps a day. If you're doing strength training, the sweet spot is around 40 to 60 minutes per week.

Any longer than that, your longevity becomes the same as if you weren't exercising at all. For a more detailed explanation on this topic, read my article "[Physical Fitness Strongly Linked to Improved Cancer Survival, Study Shows.](#)"

Frequently Asked Questions About the Link Between High-Fat Diets and Breast Cancer

Q: How does a high-fat diet influence the spread of breast cancer?

A: A high-fat diet dramatically accelerates metastasis of breast cancer cells by altering platelet behavior. Platelets become hyperactive and release fibronectin, a protein that helps cancer cells stick to blood vessel walls and invade other organs, especially the lungs. This dietary pattern also leads to faster blood clotting, which predicts more aggressive cancer progression.

Q: Can changing my diet reduce breast cancer risk?

A: Yes, dietary changes rapidly and significantly reduce cancer risk. Research shows that switching from a high-fat to a whole-food diet with an emphasis on carbohydrates as cellular fuel decreases platelet activation and fibronectin production, reducing the likelihood of cancer cells from spreading.

Q: What types of fats are most harmful when it comes to breast cancer?

A: Polyunsaturated fats (PUFs), especially omega-6 fatty acids found in vegetable oils (like corn, soybean, and sunflower oil), are particularly dangerous. They promote oxidative stress, hormonal imbalances, and chronic inflammation – all factors that contribute to tumor growth and metastasis. While omega-3 is beneficial for overall health, moderation is required because even too much healthy fats won't be good for you.

Q: How does obesity interact with dietary fat to affect breast cancer?

A: Obesity exacerbates the harmful effects of a high-fat diet. It leads to chronic inflammation, vascular dysfunction, and increased blood clotting, all of which support cancer metastasis. Obese people also experience hormonal imbalances, particularly increased estrogen levels, which fuel breast cancer cell growth, especially after menopause.

Q: What are the recommended steps to reduce dietary risks for breast cancer?

A: To lower your risk, follow the recommendations below:

- **Avoid vegetable oils** – Take note of products containing soybean, corn, safflower, and canola oil.
- **Keep fat intake below 30% of daily calories** – Look for healthy, animal-based fats like ghee or grass fed butter. Coconut oil is also recommended.
- **Eat whole, unprocessed foods** – Examples include vegetables, fruits, and raw, grass fed dairy.
- **Focus on healthy carbs** – Dietary recommendations include root vegetables and white rice.

- **Exercise regularly** – Aiming for 10,000 steps per day and 40 to 60 minutes of weekly strength training.

Sources and References

- ¹ American Cancer Society, Key Statistics for Breast Cancer
- ² Nature Communications volume 16, Article number: 2897 (2025)
- ³ Cureus. 2022 Dec 8;14(12):e32309
- ⁴ Br J Sports Med. 2025 Jan 21:bjsports-2024-108671