Red Meat Increases Breast Cancer Risk

New data from Harvard’s Nurses’ Health Study II show that women who consumed one and a half or more servings of red meat per day had nearly double the risk of developing hormone receptor-positive breast cancer compared with women consuming three or fewer servings of red meat per week. Hormone receptor-positive breast cancer is the most common type of breast cancer and has been on the rise in recent years. This study involved more than 90,000 premenopausal women age 26 to 46 who completed food surveys during a 12-year period. Animal fat and red meat intake were found to increase premenopausal breast cancer risk in a previous analysis of the Nurses’ Health Study II. Possible reasons for this association include carcinogens produced as meat is cooked, hormones given to cattle for growth promotion, red meat’s high content of heme iron, which has been shown to increase estrogen-dependent tumor growth, and red meat’s high fat content.


Obesity Decreases Ovarian Cancer Survival

The medical records from Cedars Sinai Medical Center of 216 women with ovarian cancer have linked body weight and ovarian cancer. Obese women were more likely to have a more aggressive type of ovarian cancer and were more likely to have the cancer recur earlier after treatment and die sooner than women of ideal body weight. Fat tissue produces estrogens, which can fuel the growth of some forms of cancer. Ovarian cancer affects nearly 1 in 60 women and is often not detected until it is in an advanced stage. Seventy percent of ovarian cancer patients die within five years of diagnosis, making it one of the most deadly forms of the disease. Maintaining a healthy weight is crucial for the prevention and survival of many forms of cancer.
