

Obesity Might Interfere with Certain Breast Cancer Treatments

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Obese and overweight female breast cancer patients may require treatment options that take into account the higher levels of the hormone estrogen found in their bodies, according to a study published in the *Journal of Clinical Oncology* and reported by [HealthDay News](#).

For the study, researchers at the Breakthrough Breast Cancer Research Centre at the Institute of Cancer Research in London looked at 54 postmenopausal women with a type of breast cancer known as estrogen receptor-positive breast cancer. (More than three quarters of all breast cancers require estrogen to grow, so blocking the production of this hormone is one of the main ways to treat breast cancer.)

In addition, scientists compared the body-mass index, or BMI, a measure based on height-to-weight ratio, of all women in the study. (A BMI of 30 is considered obese.)

Researchers found that obese breast cancer patients had higher levels of estrogen than women of normal weight, meaning they had a harder time fighting breast cancer. In fact, scientists found that women with a BMI of 30 to 35 had levels of estrogen that were about three times higher than levels in women with a BMI less than 25.

After they were treated with hormone-suppressing drugs, the estrogen levels in obese women dropped. But their estrogen levels still remained double that of women with normal BMIs.

However, researchers said women shouldn't worry about these results. "Women with higher BMIs should certainly not be alarmed by this finding or stop taking their treatment," said Mitch Dowsett, PhD, a professor of biochemical endocrinology at Chester Beatty Laboratories, in London, and senior study author. "Our study only takes us a step closer to understanding which of the treatment options available might be the most suitable for individual women."

About one in eight women (just under 12 percent) will develop invasive breast cancer over the course of their lifetime, and African-American women are not immune. In fact, though white women are slightly more likely to develop breast cancer overall, the condition is more common in black women younger than 45 than their white counterparts. What's more, African-American women are more likely to die of breast cancer than any other ethnic group.

But there is good news. Did you know exercise can lower your overall breast cancer risk? [Click here](#) to learn more.

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