

# TRADITIONS

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## NATURAL MENOPAUSE OPTIONS FOR BREAST CANCER PATIENTS & SURVIVORS

**Tori Hudson, ND - Medical Director**

Most women with breast cancer, are already postmenopausal. Others are in the transition of perimenopause, or may become symptomatic with perimenopause/ menopause symptoms as a result of some of the breast cancer treatments including chemotherapy, tamoxifen, aromatase inhibitors or ovarian surgery.

The more common symptoms that can become problematic for many women include hot flashes/night sweats, insomnia, irritability, depression, lowered sexual function and vaginal dryness.

The use of estrogens and progestogens and testosterone that is delivered in methods that have systemic effects is generally considered to be contraindicated in women with a history of breast cancer. That leaves us with the search for methods that can help these symptoms, but are considered to be safe. In the realm of herbal and nutritional therapies, we have numerous choices.

The first one to consider is black cohosh. There have been changes in our understanding of the constituents and mechanism of action of black cohosh. The most striking new research shows that black cohosh does not contain phytoestrogens. In addition, it does not effect any hormonal parameters, meaning it does not increase blood levels of estrogen, progesterone, follicle stimulating hormone or leutinizing hormone. The safety profile of black cohosh is extremely encouraging. In fact, there are laboratory studies that demonstrate that black cohosh inhibits estrogen receptor positive breast cancer cells and augments the anti-estrogenic activity of tamoxifen. A very recent study also showed that women who used black cohosh for menopause symptoms had a lower incidence of breast cancer later in life. Data from studies and reports suggest that negative events associated with black cohosh are rare and mild. Gastrointestinal upsets and rashes are the most common side effects that are reported. The most effective dose of black cohosh appears to be a standardized extract that contains 40 mg and is taken twice daily.

A combination of black cohosh and St. John's wort can also be very helpful for symptoms that include depression/irritability. Insomnia can be a difficult symptom to treat, but if the cause is waking due to night sweats, then we're back to black cohosh. If you are having trouble falling asleep or waking unrelated to a hot flash, then single or combination products that are often effective include valerian, melatonin, 5-hydroxy-tryptophan, passion flower and skullcap.

For vaginal dryness, I often recommend a vaginal moisturizer (EMERITA) several nights a week and REPLENSE a couple nights per week. These do not contain estrogen. On the other hand, most oncologists and physicians feel comfortable with some of the vaginal estrogen products such as the ESTRING. Studies show that there is no increase in blood levels of estrogen with the use of this product. At our clinic, we use an even lower dose vaginal estrogen called ESTRIOLE. However, this lower dose is still effective to relieve the vaginal dryness and any vaginal pain symptoms.

Herbs and nutrients that may be controversial are herbs that contain phytoestrogens: these include hops, licorice, dong quai, red clover and soy products. There is no science that demonstrates these will cause a recurrence of breast cancer, but these very weak estrogen like compounds and how they affect the breast are perhaps worth being cautious.

The naturopathic physicians at our clinic can offer very specific natural, safe, menopause treatments that address your specific symptoms, and take into account your individual needs and considerations due to breast cancer history, medications, and other health care issues.

Providing menopause options for breast cancer survivors is a strong area where natural therapies can make a contribution to your quality of life.

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# ACUPUNCTURE & CANCER CARE

Leigh Kochan Lewis, ND

Acupuncture uses needles to stimulate the body's pressure or energy points. Thin needles are typically inserted just under the skin and left in place for about a half-hour. According to Chinese medicine theory, this helps restore balance and a healthy energy flow within the body. Acupuncture may help to alleviate symptoms associated with cancer as well as some of the side effects of conventional treatment. Research studies support the use of acupuncture in complementary cancer care and according to a National Institutes of Health (NIH) expert panel, acupuncture is an effective treatment for pain and nausea caused by chemotherapy drugs, surgery and radiation. Acupuncture may also help to alleviate fatigue associated with such treatments and menopausal symptoms in the breast cancer survivor. In addition, acupuncture has been shown to improve sleep, memory, mood, energy, and general well being in people living with cancer.

## Pain

That acupuncture is a powerful tool for general pain control is widely known. However, its effectiveness in controlling some cancer-related pain and in reducing narcotic use is now becoming clear. The needles stimulate nerve endings, causing the brain to release endorphins, a natural painkiller. In addition, it can be quite helpful in curbing headaches often experienced as a side effect of treatments as well as peripheral neuropathy and post-operative pain.

## Nausea

Acupuncture is often used as a complementary treatment modality to treat nausea or vomiting in a variety of conditions including that related to chemotherapy. The dreaded nausea and vomiting which commonly occurs as a result of chemotherapy can often be debilitating. Acupuncture may provide additional relief of nausea beyond what medication alone can achieve and thus has been incorporated into the services provided by many mainstream oncology practices.

*“...acupuncture is a powerful tool for general pain control...”*

## Post-Surgery

Acupuncture has been used as an adjunct treatment in anesthesia, post-operative pain control, and in supporting recovery from surgery. Electroacupuncture (acupuncture in which weak electrical currents are sent through the needles) has been shown to be an effective treatment for the upper limb edema that often occurs following surgery for breast cancer. It can also help to treat symptomatic scars and nerve dysfunction at the surgical site. In addition, acupuncture imparts a sense of well being, improves energy, mood, sleep and accelerates recovery.

### **A Woman's Time**

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Our website:  
[www.awomanstime.com](http://www.awomanstime.com)

For more articles and education:  
[www.torihudson.com](http://www.torihudson.com)

# AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY GUIDELINES FOR SCREENING THE USE OF MRI

Amy S. Thurmond, MD

On March 28, 2007 the American Cancer Society issued new guidelines suggesting yearly breast MRI for some women. After reviewing research on MRI accumulated since 2002, a panel of experts endorsed annual MRI screening in addition to annual mammography for women whose risk for developing breast cancer is about 20 percent or higher than the average risk. This includes women who have tested positive for one of the know breast cancer genes; a woman with a close relative—mother, sister or daughter—who has tested positive for one of the genes; a woman with at least two close relatives who have had breast cancer; or a woman who has had chest radiation for Hodgkin’s disease. Approximately 1.6 million American women fall into this high-risk category. In addition, the guidelines suggest that women at lesser but still elevated risk, for example breast cancer survivors, could benefit from screening MRIs particularly if their mammograms are dense and therefore less sensitive for detecting early cancers.

*“...it is best to consult with a radiologist regarding the risks versus the benefits of MRI screening.”*

MRI examinations require an injection of gadolinium, generate 1500 to 2000 individual images, require approximately an hour to perform, cost around \$1500, and are difficult to interpret. However, the data shows that in high risk women they double the cancer detection rate from 3% to 6%.

In any individual patient, it is best to consult with a radiologist regarding the risks versus the benefits of MRI screening. A woman’s family history, physical exam findings and symptoms, and the quality of her mammographic imaging can all be taken into consideration, and a screening program agreed upon which

## WOMEN’S IMAGING

### Epic Imaging

#### An Overview

Unique. No better word describes women as a whole or the medical issues we face throughout our life spans. With the first rumblings of our hormones in early adolescence, our bodies begin the changes that will influence many of our healthcare decisions. Menstruation, pregnancy, postpartum care, menopause, hormone replacement and the conditions that can result from these changes such as heart disease, bladder problems, bone loss and cancers are all the concerns of the specialized science of women’s health.

Diagnostic imaging plays a very important role in providing you and your physician with the information you will need to make key decisions about your health. The emphasis is on diagnosis, monitoring and prevention with particular attention paid to consistent evaluation and education.

#### Women’s Imaging at EPIC

For almost five decades, EPIC Imaging has continually invested in highly sophisticated technology to advance the quality of women’s imaging in Oregon. High definition ultrasound, digital mammography systems, breast MRI, PET/CT, PEM, specialized biopsy equipment, and bone mineral densitometry are just a few examples of the technology that sets EPIC apart in this field.

EPIC’s women’s imaging service includes comprehensive breast imaging; oncology studies; infertility and reproductive studies; pelvic support disorders; varicose vein treatment; advanced cardiac imaging and more.

# PAIN MANAGEMENT & ALPHA STIM

**Moira Fitzpatrick, PhD, ND**

Chronic pain or chronic recurring pain can be as mild as a daily or episodic nuisance to such severe pain as to cause disability and life altering diminished function. In addition to natural herbal and nutrient supplements replacing or enhancing pain management medications, there are some new techniques, that can offer significant benefits in pain management as well as contribute to treating the underlying condition and offer hope for health restoration. One of those techniques is called Alpha Stim.

Alpha Stim is a microcurrent unit used in the treatment of pain syndromes, including back pain, carpal tunnel, arthritis, migraines, fibromyalgia, muscle spasms, cancer related pains and TMJ. One of my patients describes the result of using her unit as "floating". She has suffered from fibromyalgia for 15 years and now has found freedom from discomfort, discovered clarity, increased energy, an ability to relax and sleep. She states "my eyes have been awake".

When I use the Alpha Stim unit, I am thinking of it as a tool to treat the whole person. The mind-body is analogous to a symphony with many sections and instruments. When a section is out of tune or an instrument is in need of repair, an adjustment is made and the whole is working together again. One patient with debilitating migraine headaches found that microcurrent electrical treatment was helpful in interrupting the pre-migraine signal or state, thus eliminating the migraine.

***“At the end of a complete treatment, I often see a smile and glowing energy as the pain disappears and harmony is restored to the mind-body.”***

The Alpha Stim unit has multiple uses. The microcurrent electrical therapy component is used to treat specific pain such as back pain, carpal tunnel, arthritis, TMJ, migraines, cancer pain, sciatica, sprains, strains and muscle spasms, plus associated pains and symptoms unique to a particular person. The discomfort is analyzed in terms of location and intensity. It is treated with probes at 10 second intervals. The idea is to treat in a big X beyond the area of pain and then to begin to hone in on the area of discomfort. Current, which cannot be felt, is directed through the problem area in three dimensions at various angles. One patient recently treated is a gymnast, who had significant left wrist pain and

## RESOURCES

American Cancer Society  
[www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)

National Osteoporosis Foundation  
[www.nof.org](http://www.nof.org)

Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation  
[www.komen.org](http://www.komen.org)

International Pelvic Pain Society  
[www.pelvicpain.org](http://www.pelvicpain.org)

American Infertility Association  
[www.americaninfertility.org](http://www.americaninfertility.org)



# *Complementary*

## BREAST CANCER CARE at A Woman's Time

**A Woman's Time offers complementary care for breast cancer patients. We specialize in the integration of clinical nutrition, botanical medicine, and lifestyle strategies with conventional treatments in the management of breast cancer.**

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Following a specific treatment, it is important to treat the brain, which involves Cranial Electrostimulation Therapy (CES) for 20 minutes. Padded clips are attached to each ear lobe and a low current, less than 1 micro amp is applied across the head. At the end of a complete treatment, I often see a smile and glowing energy as the pain disappears and harmony is restored to the mind-body.

CES is a small electric current passed across the head for therapeutic purposes. (1) Cranial electrotherapy stimulation is typically used for the treatment of fibromyalgia, anxiety, depression, insomnia and stress. Additionally, it provides completion for other treatments of pain by integrating the healing with the brain. Dr. Daniel Kirsch, PhD, who created the Alpha Stim unit and who has been involved in significant research, thinks that the treatment has a direct effect on the lower part of the brain, the limbic system, reticular activating system, the hypothalamus. Some research conducted by Ferdjallah suggests that a fraction of the CES current reaches the thalamic area of the brain and may result in the release of neurotransmitters. There is some research that demonstrates an increase in theta and alpha waves, plus a decrease in Beta waves on the EEG, while an individual is being treated with CES. (2) This suggests that the mental state is affected by CES. Clinically, I have used CES to support individuals in calming down when overwhelmed with anxious, racing thoughts. Additionally, it can be used to deepen the relaxed state induced by hypnotherapy. At the completion of a journey, an individual typically accesses a new, desired sensory experience. The use of CES can support the anchoring in or remembering the state, thus making it easier to access this state and integrate it into daily life.

While the mechanism of Cranial electrotherapy stimulation continues to remain a mystery, it is evident that it can result in a change of state. This result can be a powerful tool when an individual is plagued by pain, depression, anxiety or stress. When a change of state is coupled with a new thought, a powerful new mind-body experience occurs, plus relief from a state that was previously thought to be intractable. The Alpha Stim unit provides us with one more tool to decrease pain and improve the quality of experience as we continually move forward in this ever evolving healing journey home to our harmonious selves.

# VITAMIN D & BREAST CANCER

Wendy Vannoy, ND

Recent research indicates that vitamin D may be beneficial for many health issues including breast cancer prevention and treatment. Research has shown for many years that women who live in regions with more sunlight have less breast cancer. Known as the "Sunshine Vitamin", vitamin D is a steroid hormone precursor. The body makes vitamin D from cholesterol and sunshine in the skin and it is also available through food and supplements. 25-Hydroxyvitamin D 3 (cholecalciferol) is the major circulating form of vitamin D that is the best indicator of vitamin D status, it is the most readily absorbed form of vitamin D and comes from animal sources.

*"...women who live in regions with more sunlight have less breast cancer."*

Vitamin D receptors are present in most tissues and cells in the body, including breast, prostate and colon. These receptors help regulate cellular growth and modulate the immune system decreasing the risk of the cells becoming malignant. Current research indicates that a deficiency of vitamin D can play a role in causing multiple cancers as well as a host of other health conditions.

Vitamin D promotes healthy cellular differentiation and immunity, inhibits inappropriate cell division and metastasis, reduces blood vessel formation around tumors and induces cancer cell death. It also enhances anti-cancer actions of immune system chemicals and chemotherapy drugs.

A study published in 2007 looked at the association between breast cancer risk and sun exposure, and Cod liver oil or milk consumption. They found that women in the top quintile of "outdoor activities" had a 35% decreased risk of breast cancer compared to the bottom quintile. Those women who used cod liver oil had a 24% decreased risk and 10 glasses of milk/week were associated with a 38% decreased risk.

In another recent randomized blinded trial of 1179 healthy postmenopausal women given either Calcium only or Calcium plus vitamin D or placebo, the risk of developing cancer decreased by 47% in the Calcium only group compared to placebo, but decreased by 60% in the Calcium plus vitamin D group.

The current recommended daily allowance (US RDA) of vitamin D for adults is 200 iu per day for women less than 51, 400 iu per day for ages 51-70 and 600 iu per day for women older than 70. However, recent medical research indicates human daily requirements for vitamin D may be much higher than what is currently recommended. Upper tolerable safe limits are stated to be 2,000 iu per day in general. Some individuals will need higher doses for at least a short amount of time, if they test positive for a deficiency or insufficiency. The normal lab range for Vit D 3 is 10-80ng/ml, however, these levels are based on our current population of which the majority are vitamin D deficient. Many doctors and researchers are pushing for new measurement values such as:

- **Vitamin D Deficiency:** less than 20 ng/mL
- **Vitamin D Insufficiency:** less than 40 ng/mL
- **Optimal Vitamin D Status:** 40-65 ng/mL
- **Vitamin D Excess:** Serum Levels Greater than 80 ng/mL (200 nmol/L) with accompanying hypercalcemia

A dose of 20000 iu of vitamin D3 per day, will raise most levels of vitamin D to a level of 35ng/ml, with the exception of African-Americans who may need more. Periodic assessment of serum 25-OH-vitamin D 3 and serum calcium will help to ensure that vitamin D levels are sufficient and safe for health maintenance and disease prevention.

With the discovery of vitamin D receptors in tissues other than bone—especially the brain, breast, prostate, and lymphocytes—and the recent research suggesting that higher vitamin D levels provide protection from a multitude of diseases including cancers of the breast, prostate, and colon, vitamin D supplementation may be used for preventive and therapeutic benefit. Work with your physician to determine your current vitamin D level, and ideal therapeutic supplementation level.

## MUSINGS FROM OUR COUNSELOR

**Karen Hudson, MP, HC**

Carlos Castenada said there's an immeasurable, indescribable force which shamans called "intent" and absolutely everything that exists in the entire cosmos is connected to it. You can call it spirit or soul or consciousness or universal mind or source. It is the invisible force that intends everything into the universe. It's everywhere. This source is always creating, it is kind, it is loving, it is peaceful. It is non-judgmental, and it excludes no one.

So you have heard a lot of talk about intentions. Wayne Dyer, Oprah, The Secret., so what's it all about? Is there a difference between expectations and intentions? What about goals? How are they different?

Expectations are usually what you think ought to happen as a result of what you do or say. Often they are handed down and based on our culture or family. We expect a boss to be a boss, we expect a spouse to know how we want and need to be loved, we think others should do certain things. Have you ever found yourself saying things like, "If they loved me they would do this or know this"? "I have worked hard therefore I deserve to get a raise." "If I were a good person, I would \_\_\_\_\_", "I think I should be more \_\_\_\_\_". Should, would and could, the language of expectations and eventual disappointment. Usually we have set out to expect something from someone who doesn't even know we are expecting things from them. This is called a silent contract – in other words we don't tell people what we need and want. The more expectations you have the more disappointment you will eventually feel and disappointment and expectations breed stress. So how do we move from expectations to intentions? Practice an understanding of the differences between intention and expectation.

"Living from intention is acting on purpose with purpose. An intention is a pro-active statement about how you want to be in a situation that puts you in charge and inspires you to take action. It makes you responsible and allows you to act on your commitments (to yourself, to the other person, to the situation). The focus is on the purpose rather than the end result. Intentions help us to commit", Rhonda Britten. An example of one of my intention statements for my life is "I am now loving in all of my relationships."

Goals can give us the day to day tools and actions to support our intentions. Intention statements are stated in the present and are internally generated. They do not rely on others or outside affirmation or confirmation.

So, this shift means that you do not ask the universe for what you want. Rather, it is a declaration, not a request. This is very similar to prayer, but you are not praying FOR what you want. You are praying WHAT you want. You are simply saying, "Here it is. Make it so." It is like planting a seed in the ground. You do not say to the ground, "Here is the seed. Please, can you make it grow?" You simply plant the seed, and it will grow as a natural consequence of your planting and tending to it. It is the same with your intentions. Simply plant them. There's no need to beg.

Intend that your goal manifest in such a manner that is for the greatest good of all. This is very important, as intentions that are created out of fear or a sense of lack, will backfire. You may get what you want, but it will yield a bitter after taste. Or you may get the exact opposite of what you want. But intentions that are genuinely made for your own good and the greatest good of all will tend to manifest in a positive way.

***"Goals can give us the day to day tools and actions to support our intentions."***

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*Karen Hudson is currently completing a life coaching certification based on the work of Rhonda Britten, author of Fearless Living, Fearless Loving and Do I Look Fat in This?. If you are interested in working with your expectations, intentions, fears and worries, call the front desk at 503-222-2322 to find out how to schedule a free 20-minute Meet and Greet. Karen sees individuals, couples and families.*



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## Our Practitioners:

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# About EPIC Imaging

The EPIC Imaging family of centers comprises the most comprehensive outpatient diagnostic imaging facility in Oregon. We offer all the major imaging technologies in both our East and West side centers and the revolutionary advance of molecular imaging in our Portland PET Center. This provides our patients with the unique ability to move immediately from one technology to another if diagnosis would be better served with a different procedure or if one test reveals the need for a more targeted study.

Our practice is built upon the principle that each of our patients is an individual with unique needs and concerns. You can expect to be treated with respect and courtesy. You can expect a clear explanation of your exam. You can expect to have your concerns and questions thoroughly addressed with patience and compassion.

## Get More Information

The best source of information about your overall health is your doctor. The EPIC Imaging website can provide you with more detailed information on imaging technology and procedures.

[www.epicimaging.com](http://www.epicimaging.com)

