

One of the most exciting parts of my work is bringing you cutting edge information. Today that information is on iodine, specifically how supplementing with iodine can lessen breast pain, reduce your risk of breast cancer, and even improve your health overall.

Let's spend a few minutes talking about breast pain. As I wrote in *Women's Bodies*, *Women's Wisdom*, and in the article "[Relief for Common Breast Symptoms](#)," sore, tender, or lumpy breasts are very common. Symptoms can occur with your menstrual cycle or intermittently, for varying lengths of time, and at any stage of life. The number one reason women visit clinics specializing in breast care is breast pain—in fact about 45 percent of women who visit these clinics have breast pain. Of course, some women prefer to see their internist or OB/GYN first, which is perfectly fine.

Often, when a woman has breast pain, she will be frightened and fear the worst. Thankfully, in most cases breast pain is benign and not a reason to panic. One study showed that breast pain alone is a symptom in only seven percent of women who had early-stage breast cancer, and another eight percent presented with both pain and a lump.¹ That said, if you are concerned, see your health care provider.

Breast pain is caused by the fluctuation of fluids. During your menstrual cycle, there is a build up of fluid in your uterus and your breasts due to inflammatory hormonal changes. When you get your period, some of this fluid leaves your body (when you menstruate). However, the fluid in other parts of your body, like in your breasts, has to be reabsorbed before it can be eliminated.

If you no longer menstruate, it's still possible for inflammatory hormonal changes to affect your body. This could occur if you eat inflammatory foods, like highly-processed, chemical-laden, or high-glycemic foods. It also occurs when you're under chronic stress for prolonged periods.

Daily iodine intake can help many women with breast pain. Research shows that those who take iodine in doses ranging from 6 mg to 90 mg per day feel healthier and have a greater sense of well-being. Taking iodine at these levels eliminates breast pain from fibrocystic changes about 70 percent of the time.² In one recent study of women with breast pain, more than half of those who took 6 mg of iodine daily reported a significant reduction in overall breast pain.³

Iodine decreases the ability of estrogen to adhere to estrogen receptors in the breast.⁴ This ties into the compelling evidence that iodine deficiency is a cause of breast cancer. The ductal cells of the breasts, those most likely to become cancerous, actually have an iodine pump in them, indicating that they have the ability to actively absorb iodine. Iodine taken in doses 100 times the RDA (which is only 100–150 mcg per day) has important benefits. These include its role as an antioxidant, in preventing and treating fibrocystic disease of the breast, and in preventing and treating breast cancer.⁵

When I was seeing patients, I prescribed iodine supplements for women with breast pain and saw excellent results, usually within only two weeks. I recommend a minimum of 12.5 mg/day, which you can get from one Iodoral tablet, kelp supplements, or sea vegetables. There are other iodine supplements available that you can try too:

- Nascent Iodine drops or Atomidine based on the work of the psychic Edgar Cayce.
- Tinctures of iodine. You can paint a quarter-size dot right over the painful spot on the breast or on the nipple once a night for two weeks to get iodine safely into your body is to apply to your skin. Or paint the entire breast.

Iodine deficiency is rampant in the United States. Is it possible that YOU are iodine deficient? Today, average iodine intake in the U.S. is only 240 micrograms/day, which is far too low for optimal health. Note: In comparison to those in the U.S. the average Japanese intake of iodine is about 45 mg/day, mostly from seaweed consumption.

Unfortunately, there are no guidelines I'm aware of about what the optimal intake of iodine is. And there are plenty of cautions about taking too much. If you have breast pain, it's likely you aren't getting enough iodine. And supplementing with iodine—a critical and helpful nutrient—either by taking it as a supplement or by eating more seaweed—will help your breasts remain healthy.

If you've used iodine supplementation for breast pain, please leave me a comment! I'd love to hear about your experience.

Notes: Rarely, a person will get a reaction (usually in the form of a skin rash or bad taste in the mouth) to adding iodine to her diet. The reaction is known as iodism, and it is a result of the iodine releasing excess bromide, fluoride, and other toxins from the system. It's actually a detox reaction and not an iodine reaction per se. Just decrease your dose of iodine, if this happens to you.

If you are on thyroid medication, taking higher amounts of iodine will often decrease your need for thyroid medication. But if you don't know this, you can end up with heart palpitations from the effect of too much thyroid hormone. So add iodine to your diet very, very slowly, and discuss this with your health care provider.

Footnotes:

1. P. E. Preece et al., "Importance of Mastalgia in Operable Breast Cancer," *British Medical Journal*, vol. 284 (1982), pp. 1299–1300; and L. E. Hughes and D. J. Webster, "Breast Pain and Modularity," in *Benign Disorders and Disease of the Breast* (London: Bailliere Tindale, 1989).
2. J. H. Kessler, "The Effect of Supraphysiologic Levels of Iodine on Patients with Cyclic Mastalgia," *The Breast Journal*, vol. 10, no. 4 (2004), pp. 328–36; W. R. Ghent et al., "Iodine Replacement in Fibrocystic Disease of the Breast," *Canadian Journal of Surgery*, vol. 35, no. 5 (Oct. 1993), pp. 453–60.
3. Kessler, "The Effect of Supraphysiologic Levels of Iodine on Patients with Cyclic Mastalgia."
4. B. A. Eskin et al., "Mammary Gland Dysplasia in Iodine Deficiency," *Journal of the American Medical Association*, vol. 200 (1967), pp. 115–19.
5. IBID.

Last Updated: October 16, 2013