

Marnie's Must-Have Supplements for Breast Health

by [Marnie](#) | Jan 27, 2017



There are literally thousands of nutritional supplements out there in the world that claim they are the absolute best for this or that. I have tried a LOT of them over the past decade since originally being diagnosed with breast cancer – and prior to that as well.

I have done a lot of reading of research papers for myself and for others, and asked a lot of questions of experts, all in an effort to sort out what actually does make a difference when going through breast cancer, and also what will help us stay well in the long run. Here's my list of the absolute best ones.

Immune Boosters

One of the first things I recommend you work on first is your immune system. This is your **first line of defense against cancer cells** so boosting immunity and keeping it strong is important. There are many

herbs, plants and various things that do this, here's my list of the things I find work best for boosting immunity:

American ginseng (*Panax quinquefolius*) – A tonic herb utilized by Native American peoples for hundreds of years, it is a good immune booster, helps with energy levels, and decreases recovery time post-surgery. A 2015 American study found that two of the phytochemicals in American ginseng, ginsenoside Rg3 and compound K, inhibited angiogenesis, the ability of cancer tumor cells to create new blood vessels to feed themselves. They also induced cancer cell apoptosis, or planned cell death, which is missing in cancer cells. [1] [This is a trusted brand.](#)

Andrographis (*Andrographis paniculata*) – Studied recently for its immune stimulating and anti-inflammatory benefits. 2016 research from India also indicates it may be good for breast cancer. Researchers stated that the phytochemical andrographolide induced apoptosis in triple negative breast cancer cells but protected normal breast cells. [2] I like to take it in tincture form, [this is a good one.](#)

Ashwagandha (*Withania somnifera*) – An Ayurvedic herb useful for strengthening the immune system, it also combats the effects of stress, reduces anxiety and depression, and has anti-inflammatory benefits. Again, we have new research indicating it may have applications for breast cancer as well. The journal *Molecular Immunology* published a research paper by Chinese scientists dated January 2017 that indicates one of the phytochemicals in ashwagandha, withaferin A, induces apoptosis in triple negative breast cancer cells and also prostate cancer cells. [3] [Here is a good organic brand.](#)

Astragalus (*Astragalus membranaceus*) – Used for centuries in traditional Chinese medicine, astragalus is a potent enhancer of the immune system. There are now dozens of studies which also attest to

the anti-cancer properties of astragalus in many different cancer cell lines, including estrogen receptor positive AND negative breast cancer cells. I've listed just one of the studies at [4] below. [This is a good, organic one.](#)

Curcumin – One of the top ten anti-cancer nutrients, it is a yellow pigment derived from the root spice turmeric, a powerful antioxidant. We have dozens of research studies on its anti-cancer activity, and it also decreases the levels of two enzymes in the body that cause inflammation. [5]

Because it is rather poorly absorbed, the best way to take curcumin is via supplementation because combining it with certain other nutrients helps to make it more bio-available. By all means, eat the fresh root too, but if you are depending upon it for your wellness regimen, supplementing with curcumin is more controllable and therapeutic doses easier to ingest. For dosage advice see my article [Harvest The Power of Curcumin To Kill Breast Cancer Cells.](#) [I really love and recommend this brand.](#)

Essential oils – Vast quantities of research now exist proving beyond a shadow of a doubt exactly how essential oils can be used to enhance immunity. Nearly every single essential oil contains phytochemicals that have research-backed anti-cancer and immune-stimulating properties. This is a huge subject, so if you'd like to know more about how to use essential oils, just subscribe to my information-packed newsletters, all free.

Goji or Wolfberry (*Lycium barbarum*) – Goji has research which indicates its usefulness for increasing immunological responses [6] and its usefulness for breast cancer [7]. Best taken in a juice as it tends to preserve the polysaccharide content that dried fruit does not contain. The brands I love are Young Living's NingXia Red (you can get that from

me) and [Freelife GoChi](#). These two taste the best – they are blended with other things that create a powerful synergy – and seem to work the absolute best.

Green tea (*Camellia sinensis*) – Contains potent antioxidant compounds that neutralize free radicals and prevent damage to the immune system. In addition, green tea stimulates the liver to secrete interferon, an immune compound that helps fight infection. We also have numerous studies which attest to the cancer-fighting ability of the polyphenols and catechins in green tea.

2016 Chinese research [9] listed many of the ways tea catechins protect against breast cancer. They (1) protect against DNA damage; (2) regulate cell signalling pathways; (3) interact with estrogen receptors for natural anti-estrogen activity; (4) inhibit DNA methylation; (5) inhibit tumor angiogenesis; (6) inhibit cancer cell proliferation; (7) induce apoptosis of cancer cells; and (8) inhibit metastasis.

Medicinal mushrooms – Provide amazing support for the immune system, see my article [Medicinal Mushrooms – Fungi That Fight Cancer Cells](#) for more information. There are two products I absolutely love, both from Host Defense. One is called [Stamets 7](#) and it's a blend of 7 medicinal mushrooms. The other is [My Community](#), and it's a blend of 18 different medicinal mushrooms.

Milk thistle (*Silybum marianum*) – Protects the liver from a toxic build-up of the drugs, chemicals and anesthetics used in surgery. Milk thistle helps to relieve the constipation associated with surgery. In addition, 2016 Turkish research [10] found that the phytochemical silibinin found in milk thistle induced apoptosis, inhibited proliferation and had anti-inflammatory effects on estrogen receptor positive, progesterone receptor positive and triple negative breast cancer cells.

Please use this herb with caution though – one 2006 research study on animals found that compounds from milk thistle modestly increased mammary tumors in rats. [11] [This is a good, organic brand.](#)

Pau d'arco (*Tabebuia impetiginosa*)- Herb from South American that stimulates the immune system, helps to detoxify and speed up the healing process post-surgery. It is also a natural antibacterial. Ongoing research on this herb is discovering some of its phytochemicals also have anti-tumor properties, anti-proliferation and anti-angiogenesis properties. [This is a good one.](#)

4Life Transfer Factors – A supplement specially formulated to help immune cells identify health threats and speed up the immune response to those threats. Transfer Factors work by transferring immune memory and knowledge from one entity to another, a rather different approach to immune system support.

I've taken these myself, have recommended them for hundreds of others and everyone loves how they feel when taking them. Many clients have reported their CTC (circulating tumor cells) counts are at their absolute lowest when on Transfer Factors. [This is the one I like best.](#) It's not cheap, but it works really well.

Supplements/Vitamins Proven to be Helpful for Breast Cancer

Coenzyme Q10 – A coenzyme helps an enzyme (a protein that speeds up the rate at which natural chemical reactions take place in cells of the body) do its work. Natural sources of CoQ10 include organ meats such as liver, kidney, and heart, as well as beef, sardines, and mackerel.

Vegetarians/vegans will get CoQ10 in spinach, broccoli, and cauliflower, as well as legumes such as peanuts and soybeans. Because so many breast cancer patients undergo chemotherapy, and because chemotherapy is so toxic to the heart, CoQ10 is recommended due to

its protective effects on the heart. Research indicates low circulating levels of CoQ10 have been associated with increased cancer incidence and poor prognosis. [12] A 2008 study found that women taking Tamoxifen had higher triglyceride levels which could lead to cardiovascular disease but taking Tamoxifen along with 100 mg of CoQ10 reduced blood lipids and also reduced tumor invasiveness. [13]

The best form to take is ubiquinol (best to avoid the cheaper ubiquinone). [Right at the moment \(Sept 2020\) this is my favorite CoQ10.](#)

Vitamin D3 – Vitamin D3 influences nearly every cell in your body and most women are deficient, especially if they use sunscreens regularly or live in mostly cloudy conditions. Termed the “sunshine vitamin”, certain amounts of vitamin D come from sunshine in an interesting chemical reaction that happens in the skin. For more information, see my article [Why Vitamin D Is So Important For Breast Health.](#)

Vitamin D3 also helps to offset some of the side effects of Tamoxifen. To see if you are deficient, get yourself tested at your doctor’s office, ask for the 25-hydroxyvitamin D test. If deficient, supplement. [This is an excellent brand.](#)

Selenium – An important nutrient for breast health, dozens of studies confirm that the lower a person’s selenium levels, the greater their risk of cancer. Selenium is one of those lovely epigenetic substances that alters many genes to make the body less susceptible to getting cancer. Selenium is known to protect breast cells from oxidative DNA damage, to inhibit the initiation of cancer by stimulating DNA repair, to regulate apoptosis (planned cell death, lacking in cancer cells), and to prohibit angiogenesis (formation of new blood vessels by developing tumors). [14] That makes this mineral perfect for our wellness regimen and most of us are deficient. In addition, one form of selenium, methylseleninic

acid, acts as a natural aromatase inhibitor, which is important for those whose tumors were driven by hormones. Selenium is also important for the immune system, its main biological role is to inhibit the oxidation of fats. It is part of the enzyme glutathione peroxidase, one of the most important antioxidants in the human body. Recommended dosage is only 200 mcg per day. [I like this one, it is dirt cheap and very effective.](#)

Iodine – Because the thyroid is the main user of iodine and because there is usually a thyroid imbalance with breast cancer, either due to pre-existing conditions or due to breast cancer treatments, it is recommended to have your thyroid checked. If you are found to be in a state of either hyper- or hypothyroidism, iodine supplementation may be necessary. Some of the symptoms of an overactive thyroid include sudden weight loss, rapid heartbeat, increased appetite, nervousness and anxiety, tremors, sweating, changes in bowel patterns, fatigue, difficulty sleeping, skin thinning and fine, brittle hair. The symptoms of an underactive thyroid include weight gain, slow heartbeat, depression, fatigue, intolerance to cold temperatures, dry skin, constipation. If you are experiencing some of these symptoms, best to go and get your thyroid checked out. If you require supplementation, the next thing you need to decide is whether to use liquid iodine or capsules. For more information and links to good products, you may wish to read my article [How Much Iodine to Take](#).

Freshly Ground Flaxseed – Flaxseed is broken down by your body into plant chemicals called lignans, which are chemically similar to the hormone estrogen. If you have estrogen receptor positive breast cancer this might seem like a bad thing (and indeed there are many who give out misinformed advice that it is), but what occurs is that lignans compete with the body's own stronger estrogen (and xenoestrogens from the environment) and, as a result, exerts less of an influence. It is

protective. Some researchers found that lignans may be able to slow down the progress of breast cancer and other cancers that are hormone driven. Flaxseed is also a great plant source of omega-3 fatty acids, which are natural anti-inflammatories, help to build healthy cells in the body, and often reduce the severity and frequency of hot flashes. Lastly, flaxseed enhances the drug Herceptin for those with HER2 positive breast cancer. [15] For more information and research links see my article [Phytoestrogens – Harmful or Beneficial For Hormone Driven Breast Cancer?](#) Easy to take, buy organic flaxseed and grind it yourself (a little coffee grinder works fine) so it is at its freshest and contains all the healthy fats. Keep a small amount in the refrigerator and take 1-2 teaspoonfuls daily. It's nice sprinkled on salads, onto soups or into fresh juices or smoothies.

Probiotics – The latest research indicates that taking probiotics is associated with a much reduced risk of breast cancer. [16] Probiotics are necessary for the proper functioning of a healthy digestive tract and immune system. Probiotics are important for immunity – as much as 85% of your immune system is located in the intestines and probiotics work to keep it healthy. If you have had any form of chemotherapy or radiation, your gut flora will be very much diminished and in need of supplementation. For more information see my article [How Beneficial Gut Bacteria Reduces Cancer Risk. This one is awesome.](#)

DIM – Short for di-indolyl-methane, DIM is a very useful supplement. A 2008 American study reported that DIM inhibits the growth of human cancer cells by interfering with multiple signaling pathways, reducing the invasion, migration, and metastasis (spread) of cancer cells, as well as promoting apoptosis. It is also a potent immune system stimulator [17]. Research published in 2016 by Korean researchers examined the effect of DIM on mice with colitis. They found that DIM

has anti-inflammatory properties – always a good thing for your anti-cancer arsenal. It also suppresses the expression of vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF), a growth factor associated with a tumor's ability to create new blood vessels to feed itself, a process called angiogenesis. [18] Chinese research published in 2016 investigating the effects of DIM on mice undergoing total body radiation found that DIM has radioprotective properties [19]. DIM helps to offset the injury that occurs to hematopoiesis, our ability to create new blood cells. This is one of the reasons people can have alarming decreases in various blood cell types when undergoing radiation. Further, joint USA/Chinese research reported in 2016 (again on mice) found that DIM reduces prostate tumor growth by suppressing a gene known as PCGEM1, while promoting apoptosis. [20] A joint USA/Indian study on animals released in August 2016 found that two derivatives from DIM (DIM-10 and DIM-14) possessed strong anti-cancer effects, and were responsible for a significant reduction in tumor size in triple negative breast cancer cells. [21] These are cells that are not affected by hormones or the HER2 oncogene. An older 2002 study also found that DIM could induce apoptosis in breast cancer cells independent of estrogen receptor status. [22] DIM may be beneficial for those carrying the BRCA1/2 gene mutation as well. A small 2014 Canadian research study investigated the ability of DIM to upregulate BRCA1 expression. Upregulating this gene translates to a reduced cancer risk. Although a small study, the women receiving 300 mg per day (150 mg twice per day) of DIM experienced a 34 percent increase in BRCA1 expression. [23] [This DIM supplement is tried and true.](#)

Resveratrol – May be helpful for estrogen receptor positive breast cancer. Two studies indicated that, in combination with N-acetylcysteine (NAC), resveratrol minimizes the action of circulating estrogen in normal, healthy breast cells [24], [25]. For those on the

chemotherapy drug doxorubicin, resveratrol has been shown to mitigate the cardiotoxicity and damage of that drug. [26] Interestingly, resveratrol has been shown to block dioxin [27], a highly toxic chemical compound in our food chain (unless eating a strictly organic diet). Dioxin is said to be one of the most toxic chemicals known to man. Because resveratrol comes from grapes and grape skins and these are highly sprayed with chemicals (one source estimated 56 different pesticide residues were found by the USDA on conventionally grown grapes) choosing organic resveratrol thus becomes an imperative. [This one is excellent.](#)

How To Know Which Ones to Take?

If you are wondering which of the foregoing supplements will benefit you most, there are several things you can do.

- (1) Seek out the services of an oncology naturopath for advice. This is someone who has been trained in natural medicine but specializes in cancer patients. You can find the closest one to you by visiting my [Useful Links](#) page, click on “Oncology Association of Naturopathic Physicians”;
- (2) Seek out the services of a trained and accredited herbalist accustomed to working with cancer patients;
- (3) See out the services of a functional medicine practitioner who will order a genetic test which will examine any genetic mutations or alterations you may have and be able to suggest natural therapies to counteract them;
- (4) Seek out the services of a [cancer coach](#) or cancer strategist;
- (5) If you don't have access to any of the above, try just one herb or supplement for a two-month trial period. See how it makes you feel.

Keep careful notes of how you feel when you're taking each one. Stick with the ones that you feel are helping you most.

Original Article post link: <https://marnieclark.com/breast-health/marnies-must-have-supplements-for-breast-health/>

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