

Become a Foot Soldier

Enlist now in the fight against breast cancer. Read on for your marching orders.

BY BRANDY D. COLBERT AND CAREY ROSSI WALKER

W **E WANT YOU!** In honor of Breast Cancer Awareness month, we're asking you to help spread the word that behavior modification

may reduce the chances of developing the disease later in life. Studies indicate that overweight and obese women have a 50% to 250% greater risk than their thinner counterparts for developing breast cancer once they pass menopause. Who better to get the news out and help others adopt these life-saving modifications than you — an active woman who's already living a healthy lifestyle?

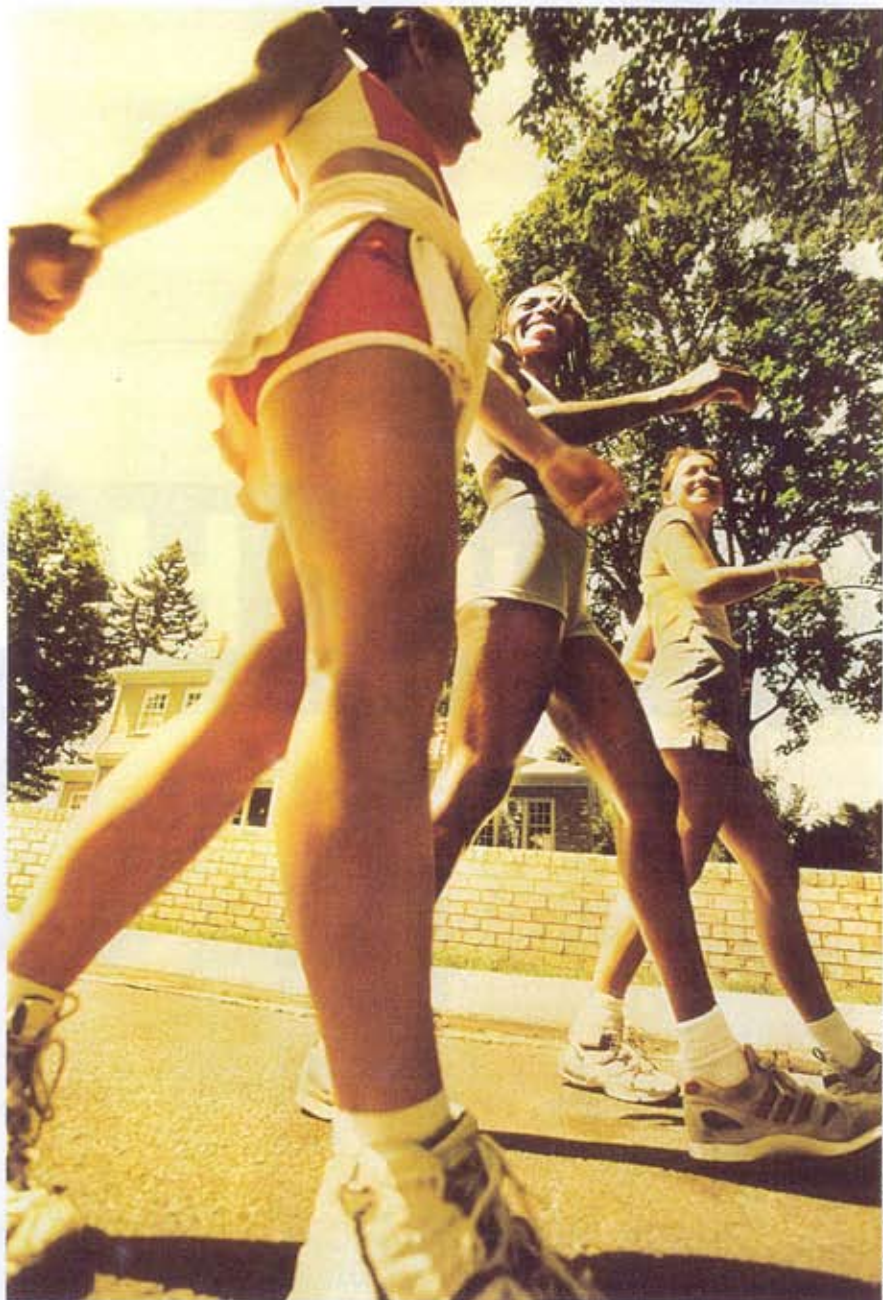
MISSION #1: GET THE TROOPS MOVING

"There is a quickly-growing body of epidemiologic data on the association between exercise and breast cancer," says Anne McTiernan, MD, PhD, of the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle. On average, researchers have found that women who exercise at moderate to vigorous intensity levels three to four hours a week have a 30% to 40% lower risk of developing breast cancer than those who are sedentary. As a reader of M&F HERS, you're probably already doing your fair share of exercise, but what about your mother, your sister, your friends from the office?

TACTICAL MANEUVERS: Help inspire your sedentary friends, family and co-workers to get moving. Establish a walking club at work and enlist office mates to join you for a noontime stroll; get relatives into exercise by finding activities like hiking, biking or inline skating that your family can participate in together.

MISSION #2: GIVE MUNCHING ORDERS

"Diet may play a role in increasing one's risk for breast cancer," says Helena Chang, MD, PhD, director of the Revlon/UCLA Breast Center in Los Angeles. Being overweight, along with the use of hormonal



Photograph by Gary Buss/Taxi/Getty Images

replacement therapy, increases the risk for developing breast cancer, says Dr. Chang. "A diet consisting of lower fat and calories" may help reduce the risk. She advocates more studies to clarify the link between

lifestyle and breast cancer. In the meantime, women should be getting the clear message about the many health benefits of adopting a sensible diet and engaging in regular exercise.

ON THE FRONTLINES

It doesn't take heroic effort to make an impact. These small acts can make a big difference in the fight to find a cure.

- **GET OUT THOSE SHOES AND RUN.** The Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation Race for the Cure holds races year-round to support research, education, funding and treatment.
- **SEND A LETTER — THE OLD-FASHIONED WAY.** Introduced in 1998, the United States Postal Service Breast Cancer Research stamp sells for 45 cents, with the extra eight cents going to research of the disease. More than \$23 million has been raised by sales of this semi-postal stamp.
- **DIG INTO DAIRY.** For every pink lid from Yoplait yogurt mailed back to the company through December 31, they will make a 10-cent donation for breast cancer research, up to \$1.2 million.
- **OPEN YOUR WALLET.** Donate money to one of the many organizations that fund breast cancer research. (American Cancer Society, www.cancer.org; Ribbons of Pink Foundation, www.ribbonsofpink.org; Y-me; www.y-me.org) Or, patronize any of the following cosmetic brands that will donate \$1 for each sale of its products to the Breast Cancer Research Foundation: All-Sensitive line by Aveda, or Origins A Perfect World Hydrating Body Cream or Lotion with white tea.

Currently, definitive evidence about the relationship between a low-fat diet and breast cancer risk may come from the results of the Women's Health Initiative (WHI) Dietary Modification clinical trial. This trial, which is expected to end in 2005, includes 48,000 postmenopausal women ages 50–79 from diverse geographic, cultural, race and ethnic groups from around the United States. The dietary goal being researched by the WHI is 20% of calories from fat, five servings of fruits or vegetables per day and six servings of grains per day.

TACTICAL MANEUVERS: Give the gift of good taste. Use the "Guilt-free Fiesta" on page 80 of this issue to show fast-food loving friends that good-for-you meals can be delicious, too. You can also invite friends over ahead of time to prepare for a dinner party. That way, you can actually teach them how to prepare great low-fat meals. Then, give them your favorite cookbook for creating healthy meals.

MISSION #3: DROP THE WEIGHT

It's estimated that 25% of breast cancer cases worldwide are due to obesity and a sedentary lifestyle, according to The International Agency for Research on Cancer. "For women who are already overweight or obese, recommendations for weight loss should include increasing physical activity

(working up to 60 minutes per day) and changing their diet to one that is high in nutritious foods," suggests McTiernan.

TACTICAL MANEUVER: If you've successfully completed your first two assignments, your friends and family members should be shedding pounds gradually.

By your example and encouragement, you can improve the health of those you love. You might just be helping save a life.

For information about the latest technologies in breast cancer detection, turn the page and read "Diagnostic Tools Get Sensitive."

RESOURCE

McTiernan, A., "Behavioral Risk Factors in Breast Cancer: Can Risk Be Modified?" *The Oncologist* 8:326-334, 2003.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- American Breast Cancer Foundation
410-825-9388; www.abcf.org
- National Breast Cancer Coalition
202-296-7477; www.natlbcc.org
- The Susan G. Komen
Breast Cancer Foundation
972-855-1600; www.komen.org