

Breast cancer patients benefit from weightlifting

By TAMI DENNIS
Los Angeles Times

No longer does weightlifting have to be avoided by women who have undergone treatment for breast cancer. Far from potentially causing harm, as women have been warned, a strength-building regimen appears to reduce the severity of lymphedema, a sometimes debilitating result of breast-cancer surgery.

Because surgery to remove breast cancer often includes the removal of lymph nodes and vessels, the lymphatic fluid normally channeled through this system can get backed up, causing swelling in the affected arm and breast area. The condition can range from mild to severe — even moving the arm can become difficult — and can begin during treatment or even years afterward.

A study reported Wednesday in The New England Journal of Medicine gives new hope for managing lymphedema. In it, researchers at the University of Pennsylvania and elsewhere assigned 141 breast cancer survivors to participate in either a

twice-weekly weight-training program or to simply be a part of a control group.

The weightlifting women increased the exercises, repetitions and resistance very gradually. They wore compression garments. They were monitored by fitness professionals who knew what they were doing. And, after a year (and contrary to those long-standing fears), they had no greater limb swelling overall than women in the control group.

But this is the key: The exercising women were more likely to have a reduction in both the number of lymphedema symptoms and the severity of those symptoms. They also were more likely to have increases in upper- and lower-body strength.

Wrote the researchers in a shortened version of their report: "Weight lifting has generally been proscribed for women with breast-cancer-related lymphedema, preventing them from obtaining the well-established health benefits of weightlifting, including increases in bone density.... In

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For more information or to Register for the ITNSarasota Forum ...
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Alderman Oaks is co-hosting a Forum on volunteer transportation for seniors. Come and learn from Tanice Knopp, Executive Director of **ITNSarasota**, how volunteer drivers can make a big difference in the lives of others. We especially encourage participation from downtown businesses and residences as this area should be vital to the successful launch of this national program in Sarasota.

Forum Details: Thursday, September 10, 2009 9:30-11:30 AM ■ At The Community Foundation of Sarasota County, 2635 Fruitville Road

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