

Why Do Some Women Still Wear Bras, Despite the Evidence that they Cause Breast Cancer?

Sydney Ross Singer
Medical Anthropologist
Director, Institute for the Study of Culturogenic Disease

I am a breast cancer researcher and co-author of *Dressed to Kill: The Link Between Breast Cancer and Bras*. We did the world's first study on the bra-cancer link, and numerous studies have since supported our research findings.

From our 1991–93 US Bra and Breast Cancer study, bra-free women have about the same risk of breast cancer as men, while the tighter and longer a bra is worn the higher the risk rises, to over 100 times higher for a 24/7 bra user compared to a bra-free woman.

Bras also cause breast pain and cysts, and make breast ligaments weak from the artificial support, which causes droopier breasts. When women stop wearing bras they report that their breast pain and cysts go away, and their breasts lift and tone. Essentially, the bra causes chronic breast lymphedema. Bras make the breasts heavy with stagnant lymph fluid, which leads to many problems including cancer.

Why would a woman still choose to wear a bra, if they knew of these dangers?

First, many women don't know about these dangers, since the cancer industry is currently in denial about the link. Since breast cancer research has been ignoring the bra as a variable in their research designs, those studies are flawed, like studying lung cancer and ignoring smoking (which was the case during the mid-1900's.) There is also big money in breast cancer detection and treatment. Mammograms alone make billions of dollars annually. Telling women that they could possibly prevent this disease by not constricting their breasts with bras goes against the entire fear and "awareness" campaigns that drive contributions and make women willingly accept the discomfort and risks of mammograms. (Mammograms are x-rays, which are a known cause of cancer and which have cumulative effects.) Getting rid of a bra is also not a billable medical procedure. And the medical industry does not want to fight against cultural pressures that make women wear bras in the first place. Medicine detects and treats disease; it does not change the culture to prevent disease.

And while there are now many bras that are based on our research and claim to be less constrictive of the lymphatic system, the bulk of the lingerie industry is concerned about class-action lawsuits for their harmful bras. This has compelled the lingerie industry to fund breast cancer research, just like the tobacco and its funding of lung cancer research. Researchers don't bite the hand that feeds them.

This also goes for the American Cancer Society and the National Cancer Institute (which is controlled by the ACS), which have made public statements that there can be no link between breast cancer and bras. Their statement is patently non-scientific and is merely political, since you cannot exclude facts from science, but it gives the message to researchers that the bra-cancer link is a taboo subject, and those researching it risk losing grants from drug companies that make breast cancer treatments. I have been told this by researchers wanting to do further studies on the bra-cancer link, but who felt pressured into not doing a study.

If you go online and research the bra-cancer link you will even see a Wikipedia page about [Dressed to Kill](#), and that entry will not allow any supportive evidence. Check out the history section of that page. It is a hit piece designed to discredit myself and the theory.

Lots of money at stake here, folks. Just like big tobacco, there is a "big bra" that wants women to keep strapped in. Meanwhile, there is a "big cancer" that wants to keep the "pink" gravy train rolling.

Some women know that they need to think for themselves, and have tried being bra-free to see how it feels. These women report that their breast pain and cysts disappear, and their breasts lift and tone, once they stop wearing bras. They usually never go back to wearing them.

But some may, which is the subject of this question. Why would they? Why would other women never even try being bra-free?

The answer is cultural. There is no medical reason for a bra. Its use is purely for fashion. But women get brainwashed since childhood into believing that they somehow need a bra for "support", and that without that support they will be shamed, and judged as slutty. They fear people seeing that they have nipples, and they feel insecure about the size and shape of their breasts, to the point of obsession. Some will even willingly submit to surgery to get bigger or smaller breasts, feeling that their entire self-esteem depends on their breast appearance. For these women, cleavage from bras is essential to feel sexy, and while they may not

really want men to approach them, they do want men to notice. Even in the workplace, where breast shape should be irrelevant, some women feel the need to be eye candy for fellow workers, dressing to kill every day.

We sure have sexualized women and their breasts in this culture! If you take a brainwashed woman who feels naked and insecure without a bra strapped to her chest, then she will wear a bra regardless of the health consequences. The social consequences feel more compelling for these women. And when the medical industry insists, despite the evidence, that women can wear tight bras day and night without any damage, those women who want to be in denial are supported in their ignoring the bra-disease link.

This is why the medical industry is getting away with their denials, as well. If women realized that their bras are causing pain, cysts, cancer and more, and that the medical community has been irresponsibly denying and actively opposing this link, you would think women would be up in arms and demanding resignations of the leaders of the ACS, NCI, and other negligent organizations. Instead, they are like smokers being told by doctors that smoking is safe and even healthy. (Doctors actually did this in the 1950's, and the ACS denied the tobacco-cancer link for decades, partly because the ACS had board members who also served on the boards of tobacco companies. Today, the ACS is controlled by drug companies making cancer drugs. Actually, they were also controlled by drug companies back in the 1950's, too. The ACS is a PR arm of the drug industry.)

There are also some women who believe that having big breasts means that you need a bra. They somehow believe that breasts need to be lifted and pushed together to create cleavage. However, lifting large breasts causes deep grooves in the shoulders, which compress nerves and muscles and causes pain in the back, neck, shoulders, and numbness and tingling in the hands. Bras also make large breasts bigger and heavier with fluid congestion. So the discomfort that these women feel is not from their breasts, but from their bra usage. If you go to bra-free cultures, there are happy, healthy, large-breasted women.

When we were in Fiji doing a follow-up study on our US study, we met many large-breasted women who were bra-free. I asked why they didn't wear bras, and they said that their breasts were too large! They said that bras are too tight and uncomfortable for their large breasts. A much different story than you will hear in the US, where women are brainwashed into thinking that they need bras.

And once a woman gets used to wearing bras every day, from puberty onwards, her breasts actually become dependent on the bra for support, just as your arm would become dependent on a sling for support if you wore a sling every day of your life. But that does not mean that you cannot live without a sling, or a bra. It just means that you need to give your body time to recover and regain health.

So the bottom line is that women may still choose to wear bras despite the evidence that they cause cancer and other disease for the same reason why some people smoke despite knowing the risks. Bras, like cigarettes, are addictive. They go beyond cigarettes in that they also are linked to body image and self-esteem. There are many women who were raised to be bra users, and changing that requires commitment to health and a renewed body sense. Indeed, many women who stop wearing bras report that their self-esteem improved as they no longer felt something is wrong with them that requires artificially-shaped breasts.

It is my sincere hope that we can get past the bra, just as we got past the corset, which also harmed women by being too tight. Some women will get the message and opt for health over fashion. Others will feel ashamed of their breasts as they are and will refuse to stop wearing bras. Some will feel liberated without a bra, while others will feel naked without one. Some will stand up to sexist comments and demand respect, while others will cover up to avoid comments.

Essentially, there are two groups of women: those who wear bras and those who do not. If we could enroll them all in a study, we could see how each group fares over time regarding breast cancer incidence and other breast diseases. I can already tell you what will be the results.

For those wanting more evidence of the bra-cancer link, alluded to in the question, here are some. There are others. See my website <https://brasandbreastcancer.org>.

SOME STUDIES THAT SUPPORT THE BRA-CANCER LINK

- 1991 Harvard study (CC Hsieh, D Trichopoulos (1991). Breast size, handedness and breast cancer risk. *European Journal of Cancer and Clinical Oncology* 27(2):131-135.). This study found that, “Premenopausal women who do not wear bras had half the risk of breast cancer compared with bra users...”
- 1991-93 U.S. Bra and Breast Cancer Study by Singer and Grismaijer, published in Dressed To Kill: The Link Between Breast Cancer and Bras

(Second Edition, Square One Publishers, 2018). Found that bra-free women have about the same incidence of breast cancer as men. 24/7 bra wearing increases incidence over 100 times that of a bra-free woman.

- Singer and Grismaijer did a follow-up study in Fiji, published in Get It Off! (ISCD Press, 2000). Found 24 case histories of breast cancer in a culture where half the women are bra-free. The women getting breast cancer were all wearing bras. Given women with the same genetics and diet and living in the same village, the ones getting breast disease were the ones wearing bras for work.
- A 2009 Chinese study (Zhang AQ, Xia JH, Wang Q, Li WP, Xu J, Chen ZY, Yang JM (2009). [Risk factors of breast cancer in women in Guangdong and the countermeasures]. In Chinese. Nan Fang Yi Ke Da Xue Xue Bao. 2009 Jul;29(7):1451-3.) found that NOT sleeping in a bra was protective against breast cancer, lowering the risk 60%.
- 2011 a study was published, in Spanish, confirming that bras are causing breast disease and cancer. It found that underwired and push-up bras are the most harmful, but any bra that leaves red marks or indentations may cause disease.
- 2014 Lymphedema and subclinical lymphostasis (microlymphedema) facilitate cutaneous infection, inflammatory dermatoses, and neoplasia: A locus minoris resistentiae. Clin Dermatol. 2014 Sep-Oct;32(5):599-615. This explains how lymphatic impairment causes cancer.
- 2015 Comparative study of breast cancer risk factors at Kenyatta National Hospital and the Nairobi Hospital J. Afr. Cancer (2015) 7:41-46. This study found a significant bra-cancer link in pre-and post-menopausal women.
- 2016 Wearing a Tight Bra for Many Hours a Day is Associated with Increased Risk of Breast Cancer Adv Oncol Res Treat 1: 105. This is the first epidemiological study to look at bra tightness and time worn, and found a significant bra-cancer link.
- 2016 Brassiere wearing and breast cancer risk: A systematic review and meta-analysis World J Meta-Anal. Aug 26, 2015; 3(4): 193-205 "This systematic review and meta-analysis aimed to evaluate the association between 8 areas of brassiere-wearing practices and the risk of breast cancer.

(t)he meta-analysis shows statistically significant findings to support the association between brassiere wearing during sleep and breast cancer risk.”

Note that there are also studies which show lymph stasis causes cancer:

- 2016 Lymphatic Vessels, Inflammation, and Immunity in Skin Cancer *Cancer Discov.* 2016 Jan; 6(1): 22–35.
- 2017 Surgical damage to the lymphatic system promotes tumor growth via impaired adaptive immune response *Journal of Dermatological Science* April 2018 Volume 90, Issue 1, Pages 46–51 "These results strongly indicate that surgical damage of the lymphatic system may promote tumor progression via impaired adaptive immune response.”
- 2018 Mechanical forces in skin disorders *Journal of Dermatological Science* Available March 2018 "Mechanical forces are known to regulate homeostasis of the skin and play a role in the pathogenesis of skin diseases...Acral melanoma predominantly occurs in the weight-bearing area of the foot suggesting the role of mechanical stress. Increased dermal stiffness from fibrosis might be the cause of recessive dystrophic epidermolysis bullosa associated squamous cell carcinoma.”
- 2018 Lymph stasis promotes tumor growth *Journal of Dermatological Science* "(t)hese findings come as no surprise to us who for a long time have been aware that alterations in regional lymphatic flow may produce dysregulation in skin immune function and consequent oncogenesis. In fact, since 2002, our team has held the view that lymphedematous areas are immunologically vulnerable sites for the development of neoplasms as well as infections and immune-mediated diseases. In recent years, increasing evidence has confirmed this assumption.”
- 2018 How Bras Cause Lymph Stasis and Breast Cancer *Academic.edu* "Recent studies are showing that lymph stasis causes cancer by reducing immune function. This article draws on these studies to further explain how constriction from tight bras results in lymphatic impairment in the breasts and an increased incidence of breast cancer.”

There is one study to my knowledge that does not support the bra-cancer link, and that study was funded by the National Cancer Institute, which has already come out publicly with a blanket statement that bras do not cause breast

cancer. They wanted a study to confirm their bias, hiring a graduate student at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center to do a study published in 2014. That study had two selection biases: it did not include any bra-free women; and it excluded women under 55. This study is now used as the final word on the bra-cancer link by the cancer industry, despite their knowledge of the above studies.