

What Can Women Learn From Angelina Jolie's Surgeries?

by Christine Horner, M.D.

(NAPSA)—In 2013, actress Angelina Jolie made headlines by announcing that she had decided to have a double mastectomy as a preventative measure against a hereditary form of cancer. Sadly, Jolie had previously lost her mother, grandmother and aunt to this same type of cancer—linked to a mutation in the BRCA1



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gene—and knew that her risks were extremely high. So, in a bold and somewhat controversial move, Jolie took preventative steps before the cancer ever fully developed.

On March 24, 2015, Angelina made another startling announcement through a New York Times Op-Ed piece: She had opted to have her ovaries and fallopian tubes surgically removed. Along with increasing the risk of breast cancer to 87 percent, the BRCA1 mutation also carries a 50 percent chance of developing ovarian cancer. Again, Jolie reacted preemptively to stop the cancer before it started.

In her article, Jolie was very clear and logical—stating that she had put plenty of thought into the decision. But recent blood tests had shown an increase in certain inflammatory markers that could be a sign of early cancer. After receiving the news, Jolie saw several doctors—both from Eastern and Western disciplines—and decided that surgery was her best option.

Potential Problems

Interestingly, Jolie also plainly stated that women in situations similar to her own should not jump directly to surgery; it was simply the recommended solution based on her unique circumstances. The procedure does carry significant risks, some of which Jolie is currently dealing with. Specifically, Jolie is currently receiving bio-identical estrogen through a patch and progesterone via IUD. Despite these steps, though, Jolie was honest in stating that she is now undergoing early menopause. Jolie also noted in her article that a surgery similar to her own carries a fairly large list of risks, including:

- Hormonal imbalances, caused by sudden and severe surgical menopause
- Complications associated with any major abdominal surgery



Angelina Jolie

- A 170 percent increase of premature death in women under 45
- The risk of developing heart disease increases by seven times
- An increased risk of Parkinson's disease, dementia and osteoporosis
- Decline in sexual function and overall psychological well-being.

Based on these added risks, Jolie recommended in her article that women seek out other options. Commonly used approaches include birth control pills or alternative medical treatments. In addition, Angelina herself wrote that she is currently looking for natural ways to strengthen her immune system. With this in mind, what are some of these other options? Are there natural ways to strengthen your immune system and reduce your risk of certain cancers? Yes.

Other Options

Here are some quick tips to strengthen your immune system and reduce your risk of cancers by up to 200 percent (even if you have the BRCA1 gene mutation):

1. Adequate sleep. One of the most powerful steps you can take is doing all you can to improve the function of your immune system. The sleep hormone, melatonin, has many anticancer actions including suppressing the BRCA1 gene. Adequate sleep (at least seven hours each night, ideally between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m.) coupled with appropriate exercise has been shown in numerous studies to strengthen your overall immune health.

2. Proper diet. Along with that, a proper diet—one rich in a variety of nutrient-dense foods—can also help to improve your immune system while fighting the oxidative damage that is associ-

ated with certain cancers. Specifically, caffeinated coffee and cruciferous vegetables such as kale, broccoli, brussels sprouts and cabbage have all been shown to be effective in reducing the risks of BRCA1-associated cancer. These foods are rich in antioxidants that help to repair damage done by free radicals, as well as micronutrients that help to support a healthy immune system.

3. AHCC®. A unique mushroom extract. A natural substance derived from Japanese medicinal mushrooms, AHCC is the leading alternative cancer treatment used in hundreds of clinics throughout Asia to support the immune system in lowering the risk of cancer while improving survival. Research has shown that AHCC increases the numbers and activity of several components of the immune system, such as cytokines (immune messengers), as well as natural killer cells, macrophages, T cells and dendritic cells (all types of white blood cells that destroy pathogens and abnormal cells). This allows the body to better identify and react to foreign invaders—including cancer cells, which very closely resemble normal, healthy cells and which your immune system may not be able to recognize if it is not strong enough. Supplementation with AHCC, though, can help to strengthen your body's natural defenses as proven in 25 human clinical studies.

Again, as Jolie said in her article, there is no one way to treat cancer because each case is different. In her situation, a team of professionals advised Jolie that preventative surgery was the best course of action—although she is still at risk of developing cancer. However, natural strategies do exist that can help to both prevent cancer from forming and complement the treatment of pre-existing conditions.

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