

IS THERE AN ABORTION/BREAST CANCER CONNECTION? MODERN STUDIES SAY NO

Scientific evidence in the U.S. and around the world does not support the conclusion that induced abortion or miscarriage raises the risk of breast cancer.

The abortion issue generates passionate viewpoints in many people. And while breast cancer is the most common cancer among women, and the second leading cancer killer of women, the public is shortchanged by unsubstantiated conclusions. Below are studies that conclude there is no connection between abortion and breast cancer risk.

National Cancer Institute (U.S.)

The relationship between induced and spontaneous abortion and breast cancer risk has been the subject of extensive research beginning in the late 1950s. Until the mid-1990s, the evidence was inconsistent. Newer studies examined large numbers of women, collected data before breast cancer was found, and gathered medical history information from medical records rather than simply from self-reports, thereby generating more reliable findings.

- **The newer studies consistently showed no association between induced and spontaneous abortions and breast cancer risk.**

Source: National Cancer Institute. www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/factsheet/Risk/abortion-miscarriage 2003

In February 2003, NCI brought together more than 100 of the world's leading experts studying pregnancy and breast cancer risk. The experts reviewed existing human and animal studies, including studies of induced and spontaneous abortions. Some of their findings were:

- **Breast cancer risk is increased for a short time after a full-term pregnancy (that is, a pregnancy that results in the birth of a living child).**
- **Induced abortion is not linked to an increase in breast cancer risk.**
- **Spontaneous abortion is not linked to an increase in breast cancer risk.**

The level of scientific evidence for these findings was considered to be "well established" (the highest level).

Source: National Cancer Institute. Summary Report: Early Reproductive Events and Breast Cancer Workshop. Available at: www.cancer.gov/cancerinfo/ere-workshop-report.

Denmark Registry

The largest, and probably the most reliable, single study of this topic was done during the 1990s in Denmark, a country with very detailed medical records on all its citizens. In that study, all Danish women born between 1935 and 1978 (a total of 1.5 million women) were linked with the National Registry of Induced Abortions and with the Danish Cancer Registry. This means that all information about their abortions and their breast cancer came from registries, was very complete, and was not influenced by recall bias.

- **After adjusting for known breast cancer risk factors, the researchers found that induced abortion(s) had no overall effect on the risk of breast cancer. The size of this study and the manner in which it was done provides good evidence that induced abortion does not affect a woman's risk of developing breast cancer.**

Source: The Lancet Beral V, Bull D, Doll R, et al. Collaborative Group on Hormonal Factors in Breast Cancer. Breast cancer and abortion: Collaborative reanalysis of data from 53 epidemiological studies, including 83,000 women with breast cancer from 16 countries. Lancet. 2004;363:1007-1016.

Harvard 2007

A 2007 Harvard study included more than 100,000 women who were between the ages of 29 and 46 at the start of the study in 1993. These women were followed until 2003. Again, because they were asked about their reproductive history at the start of the study, recall bias was unlikely to be a problem.

- **After adjusting for known breast cancer risk factors, the researchers found no link between both spontaneous or induced abortions and breast cancer.**

Oxford University

The Collaborative Group on Hormonal Factors in Breast Cancer, based out of Oxford University in England, in 2006, put together the results from 53 separate studies from 16 different countries. These studies included about 83,000 women with breast cancer. The researchers concluded that "the totality of worldwide epidemiological evidence indicates that pregnancies ending as either spontaneous or induced abortions do not have adverse effects on women's subsequent risk of developing breast cancer."

- **Again, these experts do not find that abortions (either induced or spontaneous) cause a higher breast cancer risk.**

Source: What You Need To Know About™ Breast Cancer,
<http://www.cancer.gov/cancerinfo/wyntk/breast>

California Teachers Study

The California Teachers Study also reported on more than 100,000 women in 2008. Researchers asked the women in 1995 about past induced and spontaneous abortions. While the women were being followed, more than 3,300 developed invasive breast cancer.

- **There was no difference in breast cancer risk between those who had either spontaneous or induced abortions and those who had not had an abortion.**

Source: Henderson KD, Sullivan-Halley J, Reynolds P, Horn-Ross PL, et al. Incomplete pregnancy is not associated with breast cancer risk: the California Teachers Study. Contraception. 2008 ;77:391-396.

American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) Committee on Gynecologic Practice also reviewed the available evidence and published its findings in August 2003. After the review, the Committee said that "early studies of the relationship between prior induced abortion and breast cancer risk have been inconsistent and are difficult to interpret because of methodologic considerations."

- "More rigorous recent studies argue against a causal relationship between induced abortion and a subsequent increase in breast cancer risk."

Source: ACOG Committee on Gynecologic Practice. ACOG Committee Opinion. Number 285, August 2003: Induced abortion and breast cancer risk. Obstet Gynecol. 2003;102:433-435