Approximately one in eight (12 percent) U.S. women will develop breast cancer in their lifetime, and a woman’s risk increases with age according to the American Cancer Society. Odds are, each of us knows someone, relative or friend, who has been touched by breast cancer. Almost 5-10 percent of breast cancer cases are thought to be hereditary, resulting from mutations of the BRCA1 and BRCA2 genes. It’s important to be aware of family history and seek the guidance of a specialist. Nearly 25 percent of all breast cancer cases in women of all ages could be avoided by healthy lifestyle choices.

The number one risk for breast cancer is obesity. The female hormone estrogen as well as insulin can promote breast cancer cell growth. Studies conducted at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center show that weight loss and regular exercise have significant impact on improving biomarkers like insulin and estrogen on cancer risk.

Limiting extra calories can help keep your weight under control. Being overweight, or having a body mass index of 25 or greater, increases breast cancer risk. While you can’t change your genes or health history, you can make food and beverage choices that reduce your risk. In our next post, we will discuss alcohol as a risk factor, so stay tuned.