

# LOVE YOUR CURVES

With *BREASTS* bouncing in fashion's *SPOTLIGHT*, it's time to give them all of your *ATTENTION* By *Jacqueline Nunes*

**C**oquettish ruffles at Prada, va-va-voom corsets at Louis Vuitton—the ample assets displayed on fall's runways mark a return to the celebration of sexy curves. It's about time. If you've neglected yours as of late, this update on the latest research and expert advice will help keep your girls in showstopping shape.

## DARE TO BARE

The touchably soft skin on your breasts is likely the healthiest on your body. "It's normally protected from the sun, so there's not a lot of skin damage," explains Dr. Frances Jang, a Vancouver cosmetic dermatologist. The number one issue her patients ask about is stretch marks, and for those, laser treatments can help fade their appearance, she says. Sagging, however, is just a symptom of aging—it's caused by loss of volume and wearing out of the ligaments that support your breasts. And sadly, "putting on a cream isn't going to reverse that process or prevent it," says Dr. Jang. But showing the skin on your chest a little TLC can be as simple as moisturizing regularly. (Plus, giving this area extra attention will keep you abreast of any changes, like a lump you'd want your doctor to vet.) As you get older, consider switching to a milder soap (glycerin-based or loaded with moisturizing ingredients) since the skin all over your body will typically get more sensitive. **FLARE picks:** Curel Sensitive Skin Remedy Lotion, \$11. Aveeno Hydrating Body Wash, \$7.50. **A little décolleté:** That alluring skin on your

neck and cleavage is the opposite of breast skin—it's almost constantly exposed to sunlight since most clothing doesn't cover it, and many of us neglect to moisturize it or shield it with sunscreen. Extend your facial skin-care routine downwards, until you reach the top of your breasts. Décolleté skin can also be more sensitive than your face, so look out for irritation and see a dermatologist about sun damage, such as brown spots and wrinkling. You can also find skin care specially designed to tackle signs of aging in this delicate zone. **FLARE picks:** Biotherm Décolleté Laser Anti-Aging Corrective Serum for Neck and Décolleté, \$55. Guerlain Orchidée Impériale Neck & Décolleté, \$390.

## APPRECIATE YOUR ASSETS

With either post-cancer breast reconstruction or cosmetic procedures—lifting, reducing, giving the ladies a size boost—"there are no shortcuts," says Dr. Elizabeth Hall-Findlay, a plastic surgeon in Banff, Alta., who specializes in breast surgeries. Supposedly volume-boosting lotions, pills and even fillers are unreliable, she explains. Fillers are either temporary and disappear within a few months, or they're permanent and prone to "migrating" or other problems. What *is* fairly new and noteworthy in breast surgery is fat injections—that is, using your own body fat to plump up your bosom. But that procedure is much more suited to shaping and contouring than adding volume, Dr. Hall-Findlay says. **Thanks but no thanks:** Petite and perky, or big and bountiful—most of us are perfectly happy with >





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our natural proportions. A recent survey by breast-implant maker Allergan found that 53 percent of Canadian women are “highly satisfied” with their current cup size.

### SUPPORT THE CAUSE

If a polite pink ribbon doesn't sum up your sentiments, try the blunt but cheeky “F\* Cancer” bracelet (fcancerembracelife.com), engraved in sterling silver by Vancouver-based Soul Flower jewelry designer Susan Fiedler, a cancer survivor herself. Fifty dollars from the sale of each one is donated to InspireHealth, a nonprofit integrative cancer care centre in Vancouver.

### FIND THE PERFECT FIT

A bra is simply a scrap of fabric, some lace and a couple of straps, right? Not quite. In reality, it's a feat of engineering, and the right one will give your breasts the support and flattery they deserve. Nearly every woman who walks into the Toronto bra-fitting boutique Secrets From Your Sister for the first time is sporting the wrong size, says owner Jennifer Klein. But it's not you; it's where you buy your bras. “There are more than 100 different sizes of bras,” says Klein. Many shops carry just a fraction of that. An ill-fitting bra could mean spillage or “double boobing” (when your breasts flow over the top or out of the sides—too small), or the band riding up your back (too big). If the wire doesn't fit against your breastbone or your breasts are swimming, the cup might not be the right shape—and that usually means considering another label, rather than another size. One of the challenges is that bras are made to be symmetrical. “We as women are not symmetrical,” points out Klein. Finding the right bra takes patience, but it's one of the best things you can do to amp up your assets. Bad posture (“You see women with rounded shoulders,” says Klein, “like they're carrying a burden”), back and neck pain, headaches and, yes, sagging are all symptoms of a faulty fit. **Squeezing up a size:** If you don't fit into, say, a 34C, your next size up might not be a 36C. “Each time you go up the band within the same letter, the cup gets deeper. So, a 32C and a 38C are actually several different cup sizes apart.”

### HOPE FOR A CURE

One of the milestone discoveries about breast cancer that's been made in the past decade is that it's not one disease but several. The metaphor that Tak Mak, director of The Campbell Family Institute for Breast Cancer Research at Princess Margaret Hospital in Toronto, uses to explain the disease is a basket of fruit. “We didn't know before that the basket contained apples, oranges, bananas and pineapples,” says Mak. Instead, they used to treat breast cancer patients as if they were all the same, like they were all just fruit. Now he and other researchers are focused on developing drugs that zero in on specific cells—“guided missiles” that are the opposite of chemotherapy, which wipes out every cell in sight. Herceptin is one drug currently used in Canada to treat an aggressive form of breast cancer that mostly strikes young women. And more are on the horizon, says Mak, who is unwaveringly optimistic. He notes that 30 years ago, half of women diagnosed with breast cancer would live for at least five years; today, that number has jumped to 85 percent. “Just because the enemy is more insidious and numerous than we thought doesn't mean we give up,” he says. “Now that we know there are different kinds of breast cancer, we can concentrate on the bad apples.” **In the works:** Researchers at Ohio's Cleveland Clinic had promising results this summer when they vaccinated cancer-prone mice against breast cancer. None of the vaccinated mice developed tumours; all of the non-vaccinated mice did. The hope is that if human trials run smoothly, one day all women over 40 could be vaccinated against the disease.

### MUNCH ON THIS

Folate-rich foods have been directly linked to a lower breast cancer risk for women, so add orange vegetables (such as carrots, sweet potatoes or squash) to your menu. “Think folate—foliage,” says Mary Bamford, a Toronto-based registered dietitian. Whether you chew on dark green, leafy foods (spinach, rapini and kale) or legumes (chickpeas, >

lentils or beans), Bamford says women should be eating these disease-fighters daily. She also points to a new line of thought that certain foods starve breast cancer cells by blocking angiogenesis, the process by which cancer builds blood vessels to feed itself. Among the foods being tested by researchers: red grapes, strawberries and blueberries (all the berries, really), lemons, grapefruit, soybeans, tomatoes, pumpkin, turmeric, nutmeg, parsley, garlic and olive oil. “We know people who eat the most fruits and vegetables protect themselves from all cancers, compared to people who eat the least,” says Bamford, a strong advocate for having eight to 10 servings of fruits and vegetables a day, as opposed to the Canada’s Food Guide advice of just six to seven servings. To fit them in, “you absolutely have to have a plan.” Fill half your plate at mealtime with veggies, and use low-sodium, no-sugar-added canned fruits and vegetables when you have to. **Sip sparingly:** A major study from the U.S.-based National Cancer Institute detected a link between alcohol and breast cancer. Researchers looked at more than 184,000 older women and found that those who had one or two drinks a day were 32 percent more likely to develop a hormone-sensitive tumour. Downing three or more drinks a day raised the risk by 51 percent.

## GET UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

To screen or not to screen? It’s long been the subject of a fierce, international debate. Studies have shown that screening women for breast cancer doesn’t make a lick of difference when it comes to survival rates. But tell that to breast cancer survivors, especially women who discovered their lumps by poking and massaging their breasts, and you’ll get an earful. While the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation admits there is insufficient evidence to suggest self-exams are an effective screening method,

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it nonetheless believes “there is a need and a benefit” for women to “be breast aware.” So get friendly with your boobs. Pain, tenderness and lumpiness during your period or pregnancy are typical, but take note of those symptoms outside of hormonally wacky times. Watch for discoloration and changes in your nipples. And above all, if you’re concerned about even the slightest thing, tell your doctor.

## POP THE RIGHT PILL

Vitamins are supposed to be good for you, but they’re a complicated piece of the breast cancer puzzle. A decade-long Swedish study of more than 35,000 women found that those who popped multivitamins were 19 percent more likely to get the disease. Another study found that premenopausal women who took multivitamins tended to have denser breasts—a risk factor for breast cancer—than those who didn’t. And while it’s still too early to make any conclusions about tossing your daily multi, we can’t help but point out that getting your vitamins and nutrients from whole foods is much more natural (and potentially healthier). One supplement you’ll want to keep swallowing is vitamin D—it’s been linked with a reduced breast cancer risk, according to researchers at Cancer Care Ontario.

In their study, the women who ingested more than 400 IUs daily of a vitamin D supplement were associated with a 24 percent lower chance of developing the disease. The Canadian Cancer Society already recommends all adult Canadians consider taking 1,000 IUs of vitamin D in the fall and winter months; ask your doc for the dose that’s right for you. **Mega benefits:** A new U.S. study found that women who took a fish-oil supplement daily had a 32 percent lower risk of developing breast cancer than women who didn’t. Check the label to make sure you’re getting omega-3s only—the omega 3-6-9 supplements are overkill, says Bamford.

## FIND THE CARE YOU NEED, FAST

Once you learn you have a lump in your breast, not knowing whether it’s cancerous or benign can be more stressful than facing the disease itself, says Dr. Karina Bukhanov, a radiologist at Princess Margaret Hospital in Toronto. Thankfully, she can give every woman she sees a definitive answer—on the same day she meets them. Dr. Bukhanov works at the hospital’s Gattuso Rapid Diagnostic Centre, the first of its kind in North America. Each patient who walks through her doors, scared and anxious, leaves the same day with a diagnosis and a treatment plan—no guessing, no waiting. Another unique feature is the one-stop care: “Nursing, radiology, pathology and surgery are all in one centre,” says nurse practitioner Bridgette Lord. The hope is that the facility will serve as a model for other hospitals—and that no woman will have to wait six weeks, the norm in Canada, to find out if she has breast cancer and start fighting the disease. **At capacity:** Currently, the Rapid Diagnostic Centre sees 12 patients weekly. (All patients must be referred by their doctor. For more information on the centre, visit [one.daypmh.ca](http://one.daypmh.ca) or call (416) 946-2297.) A fully operating facility could serve five times that number, says Lord—that’s some 3,000 per year. □