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Obese women at high risk of breast cancer

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Overweight women especially those with morbid obesity are at a higher risk of developing breast cancer at an earlier age, according to new research.

The researchers examined a sample of 524 women diagnosed with breast cancer who were treated at the university hospital San Cecilio from January 2009 to September 2010 in Granada, Spain.

They assessed the nutritional status of these patients (normal weight, obesity and morbid obesity) and their age at diagnosis. Women with a family history of breast cancer were separated from those lacking it.

The researchers found that obesity in women is associated with diagnosis of breast cancer at a younger age. This finding contrasts with the results obtained in previous studies that demonstrated that individuals with higher body mass index had lower risk of suffering breast cancer.

The University of Granada researchers found that women diagnosed with breast cancer at an earlier age were those who started menstruating when younger than 10 years. Thus, age at menarche is determinant in the development and diagnosis of breast cancer, especially in women with morbid obesity.

Therefore, although genetics and family history of cancer are very relevant factors (up to 18percent of breast cancer in obese women had a genetic factor), this study proved that obesity especially the most severe cases is the most relevant factor in early development of breast cancer.

The study was recently published in the Spanish journal Nutricion Hospitalaria.

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