

Study suggests chemotherapy diminishes fertility in breast cancer patients

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Pre-menopausal breast cancer survivors who were treated with chemotherapy following surgery were more likely to have diminished ovarian reserve - the capacity of the ovaries to provide eggs capable of being fertilized - compared to women who have never had breast cancer, according to a study led by Dana-Farber Cancer Institute investigators. Their findings will be presented at the annual meeting of the American Society of Clinical Oncology in Chicago.

The researchers analyzed markers of ovarian reserve in 20 premenopausal breast cancer patients who had been treated with adjuvant chemotherapy, who were one or more years out from their diagnosis, and who had no evidence of recurrence. This group was compared with a "control" group of 20 like-aged women without a history of the disease.

The evaluation involved five tests conducted two, three or four days after a menstrual cycle to assess the ovaries' physical condition, hormone levels and a compound involved in the menstrual cycle. In four of the five tests, the breast cancer survivors had a worse ovarian reserve than did the control group. The other test showed no major difference between the two groups.

"These findings may have important implications for women who are interested in having children after receiving chemotherapy," said Ann Partridge, MD, MPH, of Dana-Farber, who led the study.

"Studies that track breast cancer survivors following treatment are needed to determine the predictive value of these tests for pregnancy."

Source: Dana-Farber Cancer Institute

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