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(NaturalNews) Many breast cancers are estrogen-dependent. So a class of drugs called aromatase inhibitors (AI) that block the synthesis of estrogen are used by mainstream medical doctors to attempt to slow the growth of estrogen sensitive breast tumors. Unfortunately, as the Mayo Clinic web site points out, AI drugs -- which include anastrozole (Arimidex), letrozole (Femara) and exemestane (Aromasin) -- come loaded with side effects including hot flashes, severe joint pain, muscle aches, headache, fatigue, bone fractures and a potential [risk](#) of heart disease.

But now comes good news: there appears to be a [natural](#) alternative to AIs. Researchers say they've found a substance that could prevent the development of hormone-dependent [breast cancer](#) and halt the growth of estrogen-driven tumors -- [pomegranate](#) fruit.

Pomegranates contain [phytochemicals](#) known as *ellagitannins* that work much like [aromatase inhibitors](#), according to results of a study just published in the January issue of *Cancer Prevention Research*, a journal of the American Association for Cancer Research. And there's little reason to think any [cancer](#) treatment derived from [pomegranates](#) would have harmful side effects because the fruit has long been safely consumed as a food.

Shiuan Chen, Ph.D., director of the Division of Tumor Cell Biology and co-leader of the Breast Cancer Research Program at City of Hope in Duarte, California, worked with Lynn Adams, Ph.D., a [research](#) fellow at Beckman Research Institute of City of Hope, and other scientists to investigate whether phytochemicals in pomegranates can suppress aromatase and thereby inhibit cancer growth. They screened and analyzed 10 ellagitannin-derived compounds in pomegranates. The [results](#)? The research team discovered these natural phytochemicals have the potential to prevent estrogen-dependent breast [cancers](#). One particular substance found in pomegranates dubbed *Urolithin B* significantly inhibited the growth of cultured breast [cancer cells](#) in the lab.

"Phytochemicals suppress [estrogen](#) production and that prevents the proliferation of

breast cancer cells and the growth of estrogen-responsive tumors," said Dr. Chen, the principal investigator, in a statement to the media.

Gary Stoner, Ph.D., professor in the Department of Internal Medicine at Ohio State University, commented in a statement to the media that additional studies are needed in animals and humans to confirm the ability of *Urolithin B* to stop hormone-dependent breast cancer. Dr. Stoner, who was not part of the study research team, also recommended additional studies to test pomegranate juice for its effect on estrogen levels, menopausal symptoms and breast density (dense breast tissue is a risk for breast cancer) and to see if it is a cancer preventive agent.

Until then, Stoner said people "might consider consuming more pomegranates to protect against cancer development in the breast and perhaps in other tissues and organs."

For more information:

<http://www.aacr.org/home/public--me...>

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/br...>

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