Q: How did you get my name and address?
A: You sent them to us. In 1995 the State Teachers Retirement System mailed you our letter inviting your participation. If you wished to be included in the study, you simply filled out the enclosed questionnaire and sent it to the California Teachers Study - which you did. Of course, all information you provide is kept strictly confidential.

Q: What is the goal of the study?
A: The most important goal is to learn more about the causes and prevention of breast cancer. We will be able to compare the experiences and exposures of women who develop breast cancer to those who do not and look for consistent differences that may be associated with risk of cancer. The study will also provide important new information about other types of cancer and other diseases.

Q: Who is included in the study?
A: In 1995, members of the California State Teachers Retirement System were invited to participate. This
CAN EXERCISE PREVENT BREAST CANCER?

AN INTRIGUING QUESTION has arisen among cancer researchers. Might physical exercise reduce the risk of breast cancer? With breast cancer remaining the most common cancer type among women, the possibility is enticing. Exercise is known to be beneficial in directly reducing the risk of heart attacks, other cardiovascular disease, osteoporosis, and colon cancer. Diabetes, stroke, high blood pressure, and cancers of the kidney and endometrium also may be reduced with increased exercise by controlling weight. Furthermore, exercise is free, doesn’t cause other diseases and can be done almost anywhere at anytime.

DURING THE FIRST SURVEY of the California Teachers Study, you provided information on your exercise activities at various times during your life. You indicated the average amount of time you spent each week in strenuous exercise activities like aerobics, calisthenics, running, or cycling on hills and in moderate exercise activities like brisk walking, volleyball, tennis, or cycling on level streets. You answered these questions for up to six periods of your life.

DR. LESLIE BERNSTEIN, a Teachers Study researcher with a long-standing interest in the effects of exercise on women’s health, has begun to look at the exercise patterns you reported. The figures separate the responses of women under age 50 years at the time of the survey from those who were aged 50 years or older and provide information on strenuous as well as moderate intensity activities. Your information should provide the clearest evidence to date on the relationship between physical exercise and breast cancer.

High School
We asked you to describe your physical activity during three times of your life: during high school, at ages 18-24 and during the past three years. Not surprisingly, teachers report the greatest amount of physical activity was during high school. About one-third reported that they had four or more hours of exercise weekly. Little difference was seen in the amount of MODERATE EXERCISE in high school for teachers now over 50 years of age as opposed to under 50 (Fig. 1). However, for STRENUOUS EXERCISE in the high school years, the younger teachers reported more hours per week (Fig. 2).

Ages 18-24
The exercise patterns during young adulthood were very similar to the high school years. Little difference was noted in the amount of MODERATE EXERCISE between the two age groups (Fig. 3), but considerably more of the younger teachers reported STRENUOUS EXERCISE during these ages (Fig. 4). It is interesting to compare Figure 2 with Figure 4; the overall decline in exercise with passing years is already apparent, just after high school.

Past Three Years
Of course, our question about exercise during the past three years will represent a wide range of ages. However, for most teachers, this is well after the age 18-24 period. Here we observe an unexpected pattern. The teachers over 50 years of age are twice as likely to engage in MODERATE EXERCISE four or more hours per week than are their younger colleagues (Fig. 5). The amount of STRENUOUS EXERCISE during the past three years is not different between the two age groups (Fig. 6).
includes public school teachers, administrators and some other public school employees.

Q: Why conduct a study of teachers?
A: We wish to conduct a very large study, one that will help reveal causes of breast cancer not previously understood. One way to do that efficiently is by collecting information through the mail. Teachers are well-educated and thus more capable of providing the information through the mail than many other segments of the general population. Also, teachers tend to stay in the education profession, which makes it easier to include them in a study that spans many years. Furthermore, questions have been raised as to whether teachers experience slightly more breast cancer than others. If this is true, it is important to understand why.

Q: Why do you want to include me? I don’t have breast cancer.
A: We must include many teachers without breast cancer. In this study, we will compare the experiences and exposures of women without breast cancer to those who have experienced it and look for consistent differences that may be associated with risk of cancer.

Q: Why do you want to include me? I already had breast cancer.
A: Your experiences are the key to this study; without you, there is no study. By sharing your knowledge and history, you may benefit all women in helping to learn more about the causes and prevention of cancer.

Q: Why do you want to include me? I’m not a teacher anymore.
A: Retired and former teachers are just as helpful as current teachers. The benefit of their experience will help identify causes of cancer and other health problems.

Q: How long will the study continue?
A: Every two years, in the fall, we send a brief questionnaire to each participant to update her information. Each time adds valuable new information because it allows us to compare more of the life experiences of teachers without breast cancer to those who have experienced it. The National Cancer Institute is providing financial support to continue this important project for several more years.

Common Questions About the California Teachers Study
Continued from front page

NEED TO CONTACT US?
Call toll-free at (800) 568-9471
Email at: calteach@usc.edu