

肥胖、慢性炎症与乳腺癌风险研究进展



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【摘要】肥胖是一种慢性代谢性疾病,与乳腺癌发生发展密切相关。近年来研究表明,慢性低度炎症可能是连接肥胖与乳腺癌的重要机制。肥胖状态下,脂肪组织扩张及功能异常可导致巨噬细胞等炎症细胞浸润增加,并持续释放白介素-6 (IL-6)、肿瘤坏死因子- α (TNF- α) 等促炎因子,从而形成慢性炎症微环境。与此同时,肥胖还可通过促进芳香化酶表达、增强雌激素合成、诱导胰岛素抵抗及调节脂肪因子分泌等途径,进一步促进乳腺癌发生发展。IL-6/STAT3、TNF- α /NF- κ B及NLRP3炎症小体等炎症相关信号通路在肿瘤细胞增殖、上皮-间质转化、血管生成及免疫逃逸过程中发挥重要作用。此外,肥胖相关脂肪组织炎症还可重塑肿瘤免疫微环境,增强乳腺癌侵袭及转移能力。因此,调控肥胖相关慢性炎症及其代谢异常,有望成为乳腺癌预防和干预的重要策略。本文综述肥胖相关慢性炎症促进乳腺癌发生发展的作用机制及相关信号通路研究进展,旨在为乳腺癌精准防控及靶向治疗提供理论依据。

【关键词】肥胖; 乳腺癌; 慢性炎症; 体重指数; 肿瘤微环境

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Research progress on obesity, chronic inflammation and breast cancer risk

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【Abstract】 Obesity is a chronic metabolic disorder that is closely associated with the occurrence and progression of breast cancer. Recent studies have shown that chronic low-grade inflammation may be an important mechanism linking between obesity and breast cancer. In the obese state, adipose tissue expansion and dysfunction promote the infiltration of inflammatory cells, particularly macrophages, leading to the persistent release of pro-inflammatory factors such as interleukin-6 (IL-6) and tumor necrosis factor- α (TNF- α), thereby establishing a chronic inflammatory microenvironment. In addition, obesity can further promote breast cancer through multiple mechanisms, including enhanced aromatase expression, increased estrogen biosynthesis, insulin resistance, and dysregulation of adipokine secretion. The inflammation-related signaling pathways, including IL-6/STAT3, TNF- α /NF- κ B, and the NLRP3 inflammasome, play pivotal roles in tumor cell

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proliferation, epithelial-mesenchymal transition, angiogenesis, and immune evasion. Furthermore, obesity-driven adipose tissue inflammation remodels the tumor immune microenvironment, thereby augmenting the invasive and metastatic capacity of breast cancer. Therefore, regulating obesity-related chronic inflammation and its metabolic abnormalities is expected to be an important strategy for breast cancer prevention and intervention. This review summarizes the current advances in the mechanisms and signaling pathways through which obesity-associated chronic inflammation contributes to breast cancer development and progression, aiming to provide a theoretical basis for precision prevention and targeted therapy of breast cancer.

【Keywords】Obesity; Breast cancer; Chronic inflammation; BMI; Tumor microenvironment

肥胖发病率持续上升，与多种慢性疾病密切相关，已成为全球范围内的重要公共卫生问题^[1]。乳腺癌是全球女性中最常见的恶性肿瘤之一，严重威胁女性身心健康^[2]。流行病学研究表明，肥胖是乳腺癌的独立危险因素，这一关联在绝经后女性中更为显著，且慢性炎症在肥胖与乳腺癌之间发挥关键作用^[3-4]。因此，深入研究肥胖通过慢性炎症影响乳腺癌的机制，对制定预防策略至关重要。本文系统综述肥胖相关慢性炎症促进乳腺癌发生发展的作用机制及相关信号通路研究进展，旨在为乳腺癌精准防控及靶向治疗提供理论依据。

1 肥胖与乳腺癌的关联

1.1 肥胖流行病学特征

肥胖被定义为体内脂肪过度或异常积累，体重指数 (body mass index, BMI) 是常用的肥胖诊断指标^[5]。根据世界卫生组织标准， $25.0 \text{ kg/m}^2 \leq \text{BMI} < 30.0 \text{ kg/m}^2$ 为超重， $\text{BMI} \geq 30.0 \text{ kg/m}^2$ 为肥胖^[6]。我国肥胖问题日趋严峻，2020 年我国成年人超重与肥胖患病率已超过 50%，预计 2030 年将增至 70.5%^[7]。

1.2 肥胖与乳腺癌

乳腺癌位居全球恶性肿瘤发病率第 2 位，在女性新发癌症病例中占比达 24.2%^[2]。国际癌症研究机构数据显示，30 岁以上人群中，36.8% 的乳腺癌发病可归因于生活方式与环境因素，其中高 BMI 占比 8.4%^[8]。现有研究证实，肥胖显著增加绝经后女性乳腺癌风险。一项基于黑人女性的队列研究表明，相较于体重正常 ($\text{BMI} < 25 \text{ kg/m}^2$) 人群， $\text{BMI} \geq 35 \text{ kg/m}^2$ 的绝经后女性罹患雌激素受体阳性 (estrogen receptor-positive, ER⁺) 乳腺癌的风险更高 [$\text{HR}=1.42$, 95%CI (1.10, 1.84)]^[9]。一项纳入 20 项前瞻性队列研究的分析也得出一致结论，基线 BMI 与绝经后乳腺癌

发病风险呈显著正相关；未接受激素替代治疗的女性中，与 $\text{BMI} < 21 \text{ kg/m}^2$ 相比， $\text{BMI} \geq 30 \text{ kg/m}^2$ 人群绝经后乳腺癌发病相对风险增加 61% [$\text{HR}=1.61$, 95%CI (1.45, 1.79)]^[3]。

而关于绝经前女性，研究结果尚不一致。一项纳入 600 余万受试者的韩国队列研究显示，BMI 增加与绝经前乳腺癌风险呈负相关^[10]。但英国生物银行 (UK Biobank) 相关研究未观测到二者存在显著关联^[11]。种族特征、生活习惯及遗传背景的差异，或是造成研究结果存在异质性的主要原因。

1.3 肥胖通过代谢与炎症机制影响乳腺癌发病风险

1.3.1 激素与代谢机制

肥胖可推动机体雌激素合成，并提升其生物利用度。脂肪组织是芳香化酶的主要表达场所，肥胖状态下肿瘤坏死因子- α (tumor necrosis factor- α , TNF- α)、白介素-6 (interleukin-6, IL-6) 等炎症因子，可通过激活 NF- κ B 和 cAMP-PKA 通路上调芳香化酶表达，导致雌激素水平升高^[12]。同时，肥胖会抑制肝脏性激素结合球蛋白的合成，使游离雌二醇比例增加，进一步增强雌激素的生物活性^[13]。肥胖还可诱发胰岛素抵抗，上调胰岛素样生长因子-1 信号活性，激活 PI3K/AKT/mTOR 和 MAPK 通路，并通过活化 mTOR 下游 S6 激酶促使雌激素受体 α 激活，增强雌激素信号并促进乳腺癌的发生^[14-15]。

肥胖会打破瘦素与脂联素的分泌稳态，而这两种物质是癌症发生和发展的介质^[16]。脂联素具有抗癌特性，可通过激活 AMPK 通路并抑制 PI3K/AKT 通路，下调芳香化酶活性，抑制乳腺癌细胞生长^[17]。瘦素通过激活 JAK2/STAT3、MAPK/ERK 和 PI3K/AKT 通路，调节细胞增殖、迁移、血管生成及上皮-间质转化 (epithelial-mesenchymal transition, EMT)，并诱导 CD8⁺T 细胞中 STAT3 活

化,促进脂肪酸氧化,抑制糖酵解,加速乳腺癌进展^[18]。

1.3.2 炎症与免疫机制

肥胖易促使脂肪组织长期处于慢性低度炎症状态。乳腺肿瘤常被脂肪组织包围,而肥胖引发的脂肪组织异常增殖,会促使脂肪因子分泌紊乱、脂肪细胞功能受损并发生凋亡,进而激活机体免疫应答,诱发炎症反应^[19]。随着脂肪细胞肥大及缺氧加重,巨噬细胞等免疫细胞大量募集并浸润于脂肪组织内,形成特征性冠状结构^[20]。

肥胖人群体内脂肪细胞分泌的促炎因子瘦素水平显著上调,抗炎因子脂联素表达则明显下降。现有研究认为,脂肪细胞可分泌单核细胞趋化蛋白-1和瘦素,介导巨噬细胞聚集并维持其活化状态;活化的巨噬细胞释放TNF- α ,刺激脂肪细胞释放游离脂肪酸^[21]。游离脂肪酸通过结合巨噬细胞和脂肪细胞表面Toll样受体,促进促炎分子(如IL-1 β)的释放。巨噬细胞和脂肪细胞间形成的旁分泌环路,维持肥胖个体的慢性低度炎症状态。

1.3.3 血脂代谢异常与乳腺癌的关联

血脂代谢异常是肥胖核心代谢特征之一。近年来研究发现,低密度脂蛋白胆固醇、甘油三酯水平升高与乳腺癌发病风险增加相关,而高密度脂蛋白胆固醇则对乳腺组织存在潜在保护效应^[22]。27-羟基胆固醇(27-hydroxycholesterol, 27HC)是连接高胆固醇血症与乳腺癌的关键分子,由线粒体CYP27A1酶催化合成,作为胆固醇的主要氧化代谢产物,其循环水平与血清胆固醇水平呈正相关^[23-24]。27HC可作为内源性选择性雌激素受体调节剂,改变雌激素受体 α 空间构象,激活雌激素受体信号通路并促进ER⁺乳腺癌细胞增殖^[25]。此外,27HC还能激活肝X受体,同步调控脂质代谢与炎症反应^[26]。

甘油三酯及游离脂肪酸在肿瘤代谢重编程中同样发挥重要作用。高浓度游离脂肪酸可为肿瘤细胞供给能量,依靠脂肪酸氧化作用维系细胞生长存活^[27];同时,脂肪酸代谢还可介导PI3K/AKT/mTOR信号通路活化,增强肿瘤细胞增殖能力^[28]。血脂异常也可重塑肿瘤微环境(tumor microenvironment, TME)加速乳腺癌进展,高胆固醇能够增强细胞膜脂筏结构的稳定性,促使定位于脂筏内的人表皮生长因子受体发生二聚化并

富集信号,强化下游信号传导,最终加剧肿瘤增殖与侵袭^[29]。功能失调的脂肪细胞代谢可导致促炎介质分泌增加、氧化应激增强,形成高侵袭性TME^[30]。

血脂代谢异常还与乳腺癌不同分子分型密切相关。一项针对非洲女性的病例对照研究发现,低高密度脂蛋白水平与三阴性乳腺癌风险增加显著相关[OR=2.67, 95%CI (1.10, 6.49)],而低密度脂蛋白水平升高与Luminal B型乳腺癌风险增加相关[OR=1.64, 95%CI (1.06, 2.55)]^[31]。孟德尔随机化研究和脂质组学分析证实,不同亚型乳腺癌的脂质调控通路存在明显差异,ER⁺乳腺癌主要受甘油磷脂和甘油酯影响,而ER⁻乳腺癌还涉及鞘脂和固醇类代谢通路的参与^[32-33]。

1.4 肥胖乳腺癌患者的临床病理特征

肥胖不仅影响乳腺癌的发病风险,还与乳腺癌患者肿瘤负荷大、侵袭性强、病理分级高、临床分期晚等不良临床特征密切相关^[34]。一项来源于瑞士的研究显示,BMI与肿瘤病灶大小存在显著关联,患者BMI每升高5个单位,肿瘤直径相应增加3 mm^[35]。多项研究证实,肥胖患者乳腺癌直径>20 mm的风险(OR=1.42)、肿瘤中位大小(26 mm vs. 20 mm)、3级肿瘤比例(63.9% vs. 59.0%)、淋巴结转移率(31% vs. 25%)均高于正常体重患者^[36-38]。肥胖状态与乳腺癌确诊时的病情显著相关,绝经前肥胖女性更易发展至Ⅲ期病变^[39]。

2 肥胖与慢性炎症的关联

2.1 慢性炎症

慢性炎症是机体受刺激后产生的持续性应答反应,相较于急性炎症,其病程迁延,部分慢性炎症疾病可终身存续^[40]。慢性炎症病理状态可导致癌症、糖尿病、动脉粥样硬化、哮喘、自身免疫和神经退行性疾病等多种疾病^[41]。

目前,临床常以C反应蛋白、超敏C反应蛋白、IL-6及TNF- α 等炎症标志物判定慢性炎症水平。其中,超敏C反应蛋白多用于评估全身性低度炎症,而IL-6及TNF- α 可反映脂肪组织炎症程度^[42]。

2.2 肥胖与慢性炎症

研究证实,肥胖与慢性低度炎症状态密切相关。肥胖相关炎症多由营养过剩诱发,病变主要

发生于白色脂肪组织等代谢靶器官^[43]。正常生理状态下,脂肪组织微环境以M2型巨噬细胞、调节性T细胞等抗炎免疫细胞为主,并伴随IL-10等抗炎因子表达,可有效抑制局部炎症反应^[44]。体型偏瘦人群的脂肪组织内富集M2型巨噬细胞、调节性T细胞、2型辅助性T细胞、固有样自然杀伤T细胞及嗜酸性粒细胞,共同维持抗炎稳态;而肥胖状态下,脂肪细胞瘦素分泌水平升高,可激活1型辅助性T细胞,诱导巨噬细胞向M1型极化。脂肪细胞与M1型巨噬细胞协同释放IL-1 β 、IL-6和TNF- α 等促炎因子,加剧脂肪组织炎症反应^[45]。热量摄入超标会造成脂质在脂肪细胞内异常蓄积,诱发细胞肥大、局部缺氧甚至细胞凋亡,最终造成脂肪组织功能紊乱,在此过程中,脂肪细胞分泌大量促炎介质,同时单核细胞趋化蛋白-1等趋化因子可招募单核细胞及其他免疫细胞浸润至脂肪组织。浸润的单核细胞能够促进脂肪组织巨噬细胞增殖留存,致使局部巨噬细胞数量显著增多,促炎微环境可改变巨噬细胞表型,形成级联效应,持续放大炎症反应^[46]。

3 慢性炎症在乳腺癌发生中的作用机制

3.1 炎症因子直接促癌

多项研究表明,肥胖相关慢性炎症与乳腺癌的发生和进展密切相关。孟德尔随机化分析显示,C反应蛋白水平与乳腺癌风险呈正相关[HR=1.06, 95%CI (1.01, 1.11)], IL-1 β 表达升高可显著增加ER⁺乳腺癌患病风险[OR=1.15, 95%CI (1.03, 1.27)]^[47-48]。乳腺癌患者血液中IL-6表达水平可达健康个体的2.3倍^[49]。一项拉丁美洲的病例对照研究表明,TNF- α 与乳腺癌风险呈正相关[OR=1.32, 95%CI (1.11, 1.58)]^[50]。

IL-1 β 可激活p38/MAPK与PI3K/AKT信号通路,诱导乳腺癌细胞形成血管生成拟态,提升肿瘤侵袭能力^[51]。IL-6是一种多效性细胞因子,由TME内免疫细胞(单核细胞、巨噬细胞、淋巴细胞)、上皮细胞、成纤维细胞、神经胶质细胞、脂肪细胞和肿瘤细胞等多种细胞合成分泌^[52]。脂肪细胞分泌的IL-6能够促使STAT3磷酸化并向细胞核内富集,上调SNAIL、MMP9、TWIST等EMT相关基因表达,进而推动乳腺癌细胞迁移与侵袭^[53]。TNF- α 可双向调控乳腺癌细胞凋亡和增殖,还可诱导乳腺上皮细胞发生间质表型转化、

促进肿瘤干细胞生成,最终介导EMT进程,加速肿瘤侵袭转移^[54]。

3.2 TME重塑

慢性炎症环境可推动乳腺癌TME构建。TME内富集各类炎症细胞与炎症介质,能够持续传导增殖信号、激活肿瘤迁移转移进程,并诱导新生血管形成。炎症因子可上调乳腺基质细胞芳香化酶表达,促使雌激素合成增多^[55]。血小板源性生长因子、基质金属蛋白酶和缺氧诱导因子-1(hypoxia inducible factor-1, HIF-1)等血管生成相关因子大量分泌,可降解基底膜,诱导内皮细胞与周细胞向病灶处募集,进而促进肿瘤微血管生成。此外,由HIF-1 α 和HIF-2 α 介导的缺氧微环境,既可参与肿瘤恶变与侵袭转移,还能调控TME内免疫细胞功能,进一步影响疾病进展^[56]。

现有研究证实,NLRP3炎症小体活化在肿瘤发生发展中发挥关键作用。肥胖诱发的脂肪组织炎症可激活NLRP3炎症小体,促使IL-1 β 、IL-18释放,加重局部炎症损伤^[57]。持续活化的NLRP3炎症小体还会诱导免疫抑制微环境形成,助力肿瘤实现免疫逃逸。肿瘤相关巨噬细胞中也可出现NLRP3炎症小体活化,推动IL-1 β 、IL-18成熟分泌,诱发细胞焦亡,提升乳腺癌细胞迁移侵袭能力^[58]。在三阴性乳腺癌中,该炎症小体活化与肿瘤高侵袭特性密切相关,其介导的炎症因子释放可维持炎症状态,加剧肿瘤免疫逃逸,最终推动肿瘤恶性进展^[59]。

3.3 肥胖-炎症-乳腺癌的预后及复发影响

肥胖不仅提升乳腺癌发病风险,还与患者预后不佳、肿瘤复发风险增高密切相关。流行病学研究证实,肥胖是乳腺癌患者预后不良的独立危险因素^[60],其影响在不同分子分型中存在细微差异,但整体均呈现不良预后趋势,该相关性在激素受体阳性(HR⁺)乳腺癌中尤为显著。Lammers等^[61]研究指出,年龄 ≤ 60 岁的HR⁺乳腺癌女性中,肥胖与无病生存期(disease-free survival, DFS)缩短显著相关(HR=1.26),且总生存期(overall survival, OS)死亡风险显著升高(HR=1.62)。其机制可能与肥胖状态下脂肪组织芳香化酶活性上调有关,外周循环雌激素浓度随之升高,持续刺激HR⁺肿瘤生长。

多项大样本临床研究证实,BMI升高会显著缩短乳腺癌患者的DFS及OS。Chen等^[62]研究表明,

BMI ≥ 40.0 kg/m² 与较差的DFS [HR=1.48, 95%CI (1.02, 2.16)] 和 OS 下降 [HR=1.79, 95%CI (1.17, 2.74)] 独立相关。一项基于SUCCESS试验的研究显示,重度肥胖(BMI ≥ 35 kg/m²) 在各分子亚型乳腺癌中均与较差预后相关,其中三阴性乳腺癌和人表皮生长因子受体阳性乳腺癌受影响程度更高(HR分别为3.02和3.28)^[63]。上述结果说明,肥胖介导的预后损害并非仅作用于激素依赖性肿瘤,还可能通过非激素途径调控肿瘤进展。肥胖相关的慢性低度炎症被认为是连接肥胖与乳腺癌不良预后的关键因素。肥胖可导致促炎细胞因子如IL-6和TNF- α 水平持续升高,并在TME中积聚,这些因子通过激活NF- κ B和STAT3等信号通路,调控细胞增殖、血管生成及抗凋亡相关基因表达,从而促进肿瘤进展并增强其生存优势^[64]。

此外,肥胖还可通过调控TME促进免疫逃逸。研究表明,瘦素可诱导肿瘤浸润效应T细胞中STAT3信号活化,并促进脂肪酸氧化,该过程会提升肿瘤细胞对脂肪酸的利用率,同时抑制与CD8⁺T细胞抗肿瘤功能相关的糖酵解,从而加速乳腺癌进展^[65]。Ershaid等^[57]研究发现,癌症相关成纤维细胞来源的NLRP3炎性小体通过介导IL-1 β 分泌,上调内皮细胞黏附分子表达并募集骨髓来源抑制性细胞,从而重塑免疫抑制性TME,促进乳腺癌进展与转移。肥胖相关脂肪因子失衡(如瘦素升高及脂联素降低)亦可促进肿瘤生长并抑制抗肿瘤免疫反应^[66]。

综上,肥胖可通过激素依赖通路、慢性炎症、免疫逃逸等多种机制协同作用,加快乳腺癌发展、提升复发风险,最终造成患者整体预后不良。

4 临床干预策略

鉴于肥胖相关慢性炎症在乳腺癌发生中的关键作用,近年来多项研究尝试通过药物靶向炎症通路,探索降低乳腺癌发病风险的干预策略,主流方案包括使用二甲双胍等代谢调节剂,以及IL-6拮抗剂等炎症因子靶向免疫药物。

二甲双胍为临床经典口服降糖药,其抗炎与抗肿瘤活性已得到诸多研究证实。该药既可改善胰岛素抵抗,还能通过激活AMPK通路抑制mTOR信号,并下调IL-6、TNF- α 等炎症因子表达,进而发挥抗肿瘤效应^[67]。一项纳入49项随

机对照试验的Meta分析证实,二甲双胍可显著降低肥胖人群体内瘦素与抵抗素水平^[68]。同时,以IL-6为代表的炎症因子靶向疗法也逐渐成为研究热点。相关研究显示,IL-6受体拮抗剂能够纠正肥胖相关代谢紊乱、减轻机体炎症反应^[69]。目前该类药物用于乳腺癌一级预防的研究证据尚不充分,但为肥胖相关乳腺癌的综合防控提供了全新思路。

未来,联合炎症标志物检测、BMI评估与多组学分析技术,有望实现肥胖相关乳腺癌的精准风险预判与个体化干预。

5 结语

近年来,肥胖、慢性炎症与乳腺癌风险之间的关联逐渐成为公共卫生与分子流行病学领域的研究热点。大量研究表明,肥胖不仅可通过激素代谢异常促进乳腺癌发生,还可通过诱导持续性慢性炎症、调控脂肪因子分泌及重塑TME,加速乳腺癌进展。IL-6、TNF- α 等促炎因子以及NLRP3炎性小体在其中发挥重要作用。当前,围绕肥胖相关炎症通路的干预研究逐渐增多,二甲双胍及IL-6靶向治疗等策略显示出一定潜在价值。未来仍需结合多组学研究及真实世界数据,进一步阐明肥胖-炎症-乳腺癌之间的关键机制,并探索更加精准的风险评估与干预策略。

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