

# Cut your cancer risk



## CANCER CAN AFFECT YOU

Many people think cancer is something that happens to somebody else, but it is important to understand that cancer can affect you.

The good news is, there are ways to help reduce your risk:

- Check for unusual changes and have regular screening tests.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Limit alcohol.
- Eat a healthy diet.
- Be physically active.
- Be SunSmart.
- Quit smoking.

The following provides information and advice on how you can incorporate these healthy lifestyle habits into your daily life.

### **Check for unusual changes and have regular screening tests**

Most cancers can be more successfully treated if they are detected early. See your doctor if you notice anything unusual or have any concerns.

Look out for:

- lumps or sores that don't heal
- coughs or hoarseness that won't go away
- unexplained weight loss
- a mole or skin spot that changes shape, size or colour
- changes in your toilet habits or blood in a bowel motion.

These signs don't necessarily mean you have cancer, but it's important to have them checked out.

People who have a family history of cancer, should talk to their doctor about their risk.

### **Screening**

Screening is a great way of detecting some cancers early and is recommended where there is a proven benefit:

- Women aged 50–69 years are encouraged to have a mammogram for breast cancer every two years.
- Women aged 18–70 years are encouraged to have a Pap test for cervical cancer every two years.
- Men and women over 50 are encouraged to have a faecal occult blood test (FOBT) every two years to check for bowel cancer.

There is currently no test to differentiate between prostate cancers that are slow-growing and unlikely to cause harm and those that are aggressive and require treatment. Because the side effects of prostate cancer testing and treatment are often very serious, we encourage men concerned about prostate cancer to speak to their doctor to make an informed decision about whether testing is right for them. Visit [www.prostatehealth.org.au](http://www.prostatehealth.org.au).

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### Immunisation

As well as having a regular Pap test, girls and women can help prevent cancer of the cervix by having the cervical cancer vaccine. For more information visit [www.papscreen.org.au](http://www.papscreen.org.au).

### Maintain a healthy weight

About one third of Australia's cancer deaths are related to unhealthy lifestyles including poor eating and exercise habits.

Cancer Council research shows that a waistline of around 100 cm for men, and 85 cm for women, significantly increases the risk for some types of cancer, including bowel, breast and oesophagus cancers.

Maintaining a healthy weight is about getting the balance right between what you eat and how physically active you are.

For advice on how to include more physical activity and healthy food in your daily life, visit [www.cancervic.org.au](http://www.cancervic.org.au) or call 13 11 20 and request an information kit.

#### Tips:




- Reduce food and drinks high in fats and sugars.
- Limit alcoholic drinks as they are high in calories.
- Choose non-fat or reduced fat milk and dairy products.
- Choose fish, poultry or vegetarian options instead of red meat for some meals.
- Aim to meet nutritional needs through diet, not supplements.
- If your weight is increasing, you may need to reduce the amounts of food you are putting on your plate.

### Limit alcohol

Alcoholic drinks, even moderate amounts, increase the risk of cancers of the mouth, pharynx, larynx, oesophagus, liver, breast and bowel.

If you do choose to drink alcoholic drinks, limit your intake. The current recommended limit is no more than two standard drinks a day.

A standard drink equals:

285 ml of beer (one glass of beer)	100 ml of wine (one small glass of wine)	30 ml of spirits (one measure of spirits)
		

There is no evidence to suggest that alcoholic drinks (such as red wine) protect against any type of cancer.

#### Tips:

- If you do choose to drink alcoholic drinks, limit to special occasions.
- Drink water rather than alcohol to quench your thirst.
- Dilute alcoholic drinks, for example, try a shandy (beer and lemonade), white wine and mineral water, or spirits and low-calorie soft drinks.
- Choose low-alcohol drinks.

### Eat a healthy diet

Fruit and vegetables are low in fat and calories and help maintain a healthy body weight. Given that being overweight is a risk factor for cancer they are an important part of our daily diet.

Fruit and vegetables also contain natural protective substances that may destroy cancer-causing agents (carcinogens) and they may protect against cancer of the mouth, throat, oesophagus, stomach, bowel and lung.

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Research suggests that eating red meat and, in particular, processed meat, may increase the risk of bowel cancer.

Cancer Council also recommends eating wholegrain breads and cereals as part of a healthy diet and to maintain a healthy body weight.

### **Tips:**

- Aim to eat five servings of vegetables and two servings of fruit each day. A serving size is about a handful.
- Limit red meat intake to 3–4 serves a week. One serve should roughly fit into the palm of your hand.
- Limit or avoid eating processed meats like sausages, frankfurts, salami, bacon and ham.
- Visit [www.cancervic.org.au](http://www.cancervic.org.au) for more information about healthy eating.

### **Be physically active**

Regular physical activity has been shown to reduce the risk of bowel and breast cancers.

One hour of moderate activity or 30 minutes of vigorous activity is recommended on most days for general health and fitness.

Moderate activities include brisk walking, medium-paced swimming or cycling.

Vigorous activity includes active sports like football, squash, netball and basketball as well as activities such as aerobics, circuit training, jogging and fast cycling.

### **Tips:**

- Be active in as many ways as you can, for example, walk instead of drive to the shops, and walk in your lunch breaks.
- See physical activity as an opportunity, not an inconvenience.
- Walk or cycle to work, and walk up stairs instead of taking the lift or escalator.
- Do something you enjoy or can do with a friend, like tennis, swimming or dancing.

- If you have a sedentary job, take regular activity breaks and move as much as possible throughout the day.

### **Be SunSmart**

The major cause of skin cancer is exposure to UV radiation from the sun and other sources, such as solariums. The good news is, skin cancer is preventable and can usually be cured if found and treated early.

You should take the following five steps when the SunSmart UV Alert indicates the UV Index is at 3 or above:

1. Slip on some sun-protective clothing.
2. Slop on SPF30+ sunscreen 20 minutes before you go outdoors and every two hours afterwards.
3. Slap on a hat that protects your face, head, neck and ears.
4. Seek shade.
5. Slide on some sunglasses – make sure they meet Australian standards.

### **Tips:**

- Look for the SunSmart UV Alert on the weather page of your daily newspaper or at [www.bom.gov.au/weather/uv](http://www.bom.gov.au/weather/uv)
- Take extra care between 10 am and 3 pm when UV Index levels reach their peak, particularly from September to April in Victoria.
- See your doctor if you have a sore that doesn't heal, a mole that has suddenly appeared or started to bleed, or one that has changed its size, thickness, shape or colour.
- Visit the SunSmart website [www.sunsmart.com.au](http://www.sunsmart.com.au) for more information.

Australia has one of the highest rates of skin cancer in the world. Two thirds of people who grow up here will develop some form of skin cancer, and each year, more than 1,700

Australians die from melanoma – the most dangerous form of skin cancer.

### **Quit smoking**

It's never too late to quit smoking, but the sooner you quit, the more you cut your risk of cancer.

It is also important to avoid second hand tobacco smoke. Even if you don't smoke, breathing in other people's cigarette smoke can increase your risk of cancer. The good news is, by law, all Victorian bars and clubs are now smokefree, as well as the indoor areas of restaurants and workplaces. Visit [www.smokefree.org.au](http://www.smokefree.org.au) for more information.

### **Tips:**

- Call the Quitline on 13 78 48 and ask for a free Quit pack. A trained Quitline advisor can also help you with practical and expert advice.
- Visit [www.quit.org.au](http://www.quit.org.au) for advice and information on quitting. You will find the Quit Coach, an Internet coach that can advise you based on your own situation.
- Practice saying 'thanks, but I don't smoke' in case you're offered a cigarette.
- Think of yourself as a non-smoker.

About one in five deaths from cancer are due to smoking.

Smoking causes cancer in the lung, larynx, oropharynx, mouth, and may also cause cancer in the kidney, oesophagus, pancreas, tongue, cervix, bone marrow (myeloid leukaemia) and stomach.

More than 10,000 Australians are diagnosed with a smoking-related cancer every year.

**For further information about how you can cut your risk of cancer, ask your doctor or call the Cancer Council Helpline on 13 11 20.**

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