



long's
of string?



100cm
for men

85cm
for women



Cancer Council
Helpline
13 11 20
www.cancervic.org.au

October 2008



How much
will being
overweight
increase your
chances
of getting
cancer?



How
a piece



While being overweight has been proved to be a major contributor for many serious diseases, such as diabetes and heart disease, the link to cancer is relatively new.

Australian data (2004) show 19% of men and 17% of women are obese, while 41% of men and 25% of women are overweight.

The Cancer Council estimates that in Victoria each year, 1100 cancer cases and 500 cancer deaths can be attributed to overweight and obesity.

The research

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

Twenty years ago, the Cancer Council began research to find out how much lifestyle factors, including nutrition and exercise, affect a person's risk of cancer. They collected blood, DNA samples, body measurements and extensive data regarding diet and lifestyle, and followed up cancer incidence in over 41,500 Victorians.

For men, the results show the risk of cancer increases significantly when waist measurement is greater than 100cm.

For example, the risk of colon cancer can double, while the risk of aggressive prostate cancer is one and half times higher.

For women, the risk increases significantly when waist measurement is greater than 85cm.

The risk of breast cancer and colon cancer increases moderately, while the risk of endometrial cancer can double.

For every 10cm increase in waist circumference, risk for all cancers increases by 6% for men and 8% for women.

Losing weight – getting started

For many people, losing weight is one of the biggest challenges they face. Some fail because they try to change everything in their life at once. The best way to succeed is to start by making two or three realistic changes you can stick to.

Before you start, weigh yourself and measure your waist (see below). Do this at the end of every week to track your progress.

Take action to reduce your waistline

Weight gain is caused when the energy you take in to your body exceeds the energy your body uses. Maintaining a healthy weight is about getting the balance right between what you eat and how much activity you do.

How much exercise do I need?

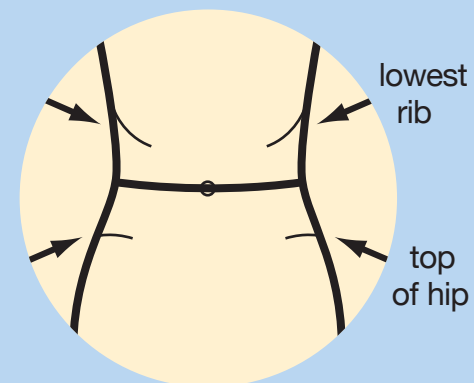
Each day, up to one hour of moderate activity or 30 minutes of vigorous activity is recommended to cut your risk of cancer. Moderate activity causes a slight but noticeable increase in breathing and heart rate, and includes brisk walking, medium-paced swimming or cycling.

Vigorous activity makes you 'huff and puff' and includes active sports like football, squash, netball and basketball and activities such as aerobics, circuit training, jogging and fast cycling.

If you have a sedentary job, try to be more active. Take regular activity breaks and move as much as possible throughout the day.

How to measure your waist

- The measure should be made directly over your skin or no more than one item of light clothing.
- The measure should be taken at the end of expiration (breathing out normally).
- The tape should be snug, but shouldn't compress the flesh.
- Measure your waist at the halfway point between your lowest rib and the top of your hipbone. This point is around your stomach, roughly in-line with your belly button.



Healthy eating

Another important way to help maintain a healthy body weight is a balanced diet, replacing fatty foods with lots of fruit and vegetables and a variety of wholegrain cereals, breads and pastas.

Filling up on fruits and vegetables will help you feel full, and reduce the total intake of kilojoules you eat each day.

Wholegrain foods are a major source of fibre and B vitamins, and provide energy for the body and brain.

How much do I need to eat?

If you are overweight, you may be eating more than you need for your level of activity.

An average man needs about 10,500 kilojoules a day and an average woman about 8,400 kilojoules to stay the same weight.

Five serves of vegetables and two serves of fruit a day, and, depending on your age and gender, at least four serves of bread and cereal foods are recommended for good health and for helping maintain your weight.

Here are some simple ways to help you lose weight:

- Stay away from sugary drinks like soft drinks – drink water instead.
- Reduce portion sizes – many people eat much more than they need. Try cutting your usual portion sizes by one third.
- Cut back on foods and drinks that are high in fats and sugars – fast foods and pre-prepared meals are nearly always higher in fat.
- Choose non-fat or reduced fat milk and dairy products.
- Snack on fruit and vegetables if you are hungry, rather than biscuits or sweet foods.

Where can you get help?

Your GP or pharmacist may be able to provide practical advice, or refer you to a dietitian or nutritionist.

For advice on how to include more exercise and healthy food into your daily life and other useful web links, visit www.cancerciv.org.au/weight, or call 13 11 20 and request an information sheet.

To find out about healthy, active initiatives in your area, visit www.goforyourlife.vic.gov.au or call the Go For Your Life information line on 1300 739 899.