

Cut your cancer risk

Cancer can affect you

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

More than one third of Australia's cancer deaths could be prevented.

Making changes to the way you live can help cut the chances of getting cancer. This fact sheet shows you how.

How to cut your chances of getting cancer

- Have regular tests to screen for cancer
- Check for unusual changes
- Keep a healthy weight
- Limit alcohol
- Eat a healthy diet
- Be physically active
- Avoid too much time in the sun
- Quit smoking

Have regular tests to screen for cancer

For most cancer types, finding it early means treatment has a better chance of success.

Screening can help find cancer early. We recommend and encourage:

- Men and women over 50 do a faecal occult blood test (FOBT) every two years to check for signs of **bowel cancer**.

- Women aged 50 to 74 years have a mammogram for **breast cancer** every two years.
- Women aged 18 to 70 years have a Pap test every two years to find early changes that can lead to **cervical cancer**.

There is currently no program to screen for **prostate cancer**. Men who are concerned about prostate cancer can speak to their doctor about the tests available. Visit the website prostatehealth.org.au for more information.

Check for unusual changes

It is important to know what's normal for you. See your doctor if you notice any unusual changes or have concerns.

Look for:

- lumps or sores that don't heal
- coughs or hoarseness that won't go away
- weight loss that you can't explain
- 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 is important to have them checked out. People who have a family history of cancer should talk to their doctor about their risk.

Immunisation

As well as having regular Pap tests, girls and women can help prevent cervical cancer by having a cervical cancer vaccine.

Visit the website hpvaccine.org.au for more information.

Keep a healthy weight

Cancer Council research shows that when your waist is over 94cm for men and 80cm for women, the chance of getting some types of cancer is higher. These include bowel, breast and oesophagus cancers.

Keeping a healthy weight is about getting a balance between what you eat, and how much exercise you do.

Tips

- Reduce food and drinks high in fat and sugar.
- Limit, or avoid sugar-sweetened soft drinks, fruit juices and alcohol.
- For adults, choose non-fat or reduced-fat milk and dairy products.
- Have more vegetables.
- Choose lean meat.
- Put less food on your plate.

Limit alcohol

Even moderate amounts of alcohol make the chances of getting cancers of the mouth, pharynx, larynx, oesophagus, liver, breast and bowel higher. Drinking alcohol is connected to more than 5,000 cancer cases in Australia each year. This includes one in five breast cancers.

To lower your chances of getting cancer, limit drinking alcohol. Better still, avoid it altogether. If you choose to drink alcohol, we recommend:

- no more than two standard drinks per day
- at least one or two alcohol-free days every week.

One standard drink is:

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

Alcohol does not protect against any type of cancer. If you choose to drink, drink responsibly.

Tips

- Limit alcohol to special occasions.
- Drink water rather than alcohol.
- Dilute your drinks. For example, try beer and lemonade, white wine and mineral water, or spirits and low-calorie soft drinks.
- Choose low-alcohol drinks.

Eat a healthy diet

A healthy, balanced diet gives you more energy and helps you have a healthy weight. It can also cut your cancer risk.

Fruit and vegetables are low in fat and calories. They are full of nutrients. This makes them an important part of our daily diet.

Eating lots of red meat (in particular, processed meat), makes the chance of getting bowel cancer higher.

Tips

- Eat five serves of vegetables and two serves of fruit each day. A serving size is about a handful.
- Choose wholegrain breads and cereals.
- Eat red meat only three to four times a week. One serve should roughly fit into the palm of your hand.
- Limit or avoid eating sausages, frankfurts, salami, bacon and ham.
- Download the free Traffic Light Food Tracker app. It shows the levels of salt, fat and sugar in the packaged foods you buy. Use it to choose healthier foods.

Be physically active

Regular physical activity lowers the chances of getting bowel and breast cancers. It can also help you have a healthy weight.

We recommend:

- one hour of moderate activity (for example, brisk walking, medium-paced swimming or cycling) *OR*

- 30 minutes of vigorous activity (for example, football, squash, netball, basketball, jogging and fast cycling) on most days.

Tips

- Be active in as many ways as you can.
- Walk instead of driving to the shops.
- Walk in your lunch breaks.
- Walk or cycle to work.
- 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 job that involves sitting down, take regular activity breaks. Move as much as possible throughout the day.
- See activity as an opportunity, not an inconvenience.

Be SunSmart

It is important to balance the chances of getting skin cancer, with having enough vitamin D. In Victoria, from September to April, average ultraviolet (UV) levels are usually three and above. Sun protection is required. For most Victorians, a few minutes of being in the sun before 10am and after 3pm each day is enough to help with vitamin D.

To protect yourself from the sun:

- Wear clothes that protect you from the sun.
- Use SPF30+ broad-spectrum water-resistant sunscreen 20 minutes before you go outside, and every two hours afterwards.
- Put on a hat that protects your face, head, neck and ears.
- Seek shade.
- Put on sunglasses – make sure they meet the Australian standard.

From May to August, most people need two to three hours of being in the sun, spread across the week, for vitamin D. Generally, you don't need protection from the sun unless you are outside for a long time, at the snow or the UV reaches three and above. People with naturally very dark skin need three to six times these amounts of sun.

Tips

- Look for the SunSmart UV Alert at sunsmart.com.au, or the weather page of your newspaper.
- Check your skin at least every three months for any skin changes.
- 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.
- Some people are more at risk of low vitamin D. These include those with naturally very dark skin, people that get little or no sun and some breastfed babies. Talk to your doctor if you are concerned about your vitamin D.
- Download the free SunSmart app. This shows the amount of UV in your area, up-to-date weather information, advice about vitamin D and a sunscreen calculator.

Visit the website sunsmart.com.au for more information.

Quit smoking

The sooner you quit smoking, the more you cut your cancer risk. It is never too late.

About one in five deaths from cancer are due to smoking. More than 10,000 Australians get a cancer related to smoking every year.

Smoking causes cancer of the lung, mouth, nose, nasal sinus, throat, voice box, ovary, bowel, ureter, bladder, liver, kidney, oesophagus, pancreas, tongue, cervix, bone marrow (myeloid leukaemia) and stomach.

Even if you don't smoke, breathing in other people's cigarette smoke can make your chances of getting cancer higher. Avoid second-hand tobacco smoke.

All Victorian bars and clubs are now smoke-free, as well as the indoor areas of restaurants and workplaces.

Tips

- Call the Quitline on 13 78 48. An advisor can help with advice and send you a free Quit pack.
- Visit the website quit.org.au for advice and information on quitting. You can also use the Quit Coach. This is an Internet coach with advice for your situation.
- People who get coaching and use quitting medications have the best chance of quitting.
- Practice saying 'thanks, but I don't smoke' in case you're offered a cigarette.
- Think of yourself as a non-smoker.

Multilingual Cancer Information Line

To speak to a cancer nurse with an interpreter in your preferred language, follow these steps:

1. Call the Translating and Interpreting Service on 13 14 50, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.
2. Say the language you need.
3. Wait on the line for an interpreter (may take up to 3 minutes).
4. Ask the interpreter to contact the Cancer Council on 13 11 20.
5. You will be connected to the interpreter and a cancer nurse.

Visit www.cancervic.org.au/languages for more cancer information in your language, or for this fact sheet in other languages.

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