



**Cancer  
Council**  
SA

# Cut your cancer risk



7 ways to  
help prevent  
cancer

Information and support

**13 11 20**

[cancersa.org.au](http://cancersa.org.au)



**Choose  
a healthy  
lifestyle  
and cut your  
cancer risk.**

# Cut your cancer risk

**At least one third of cancers in Australia are preventable.**<sup>1</sup> While there are some cancer risk factors that we cannot control (such as age or family history), lifestyle has a big impact on cancer risk and many cancers are caused by modifiable factors including smoking, obesity and overexposure to the sun's ultraviolet (UV) radiation.

The good news is that making changes to your lifestyle can help cut your cancer risk.

- 1. Check for unusual changes in the body and have regular screening tests**
- 2. Limit alcohol**
- 3. Maintain a healthy weight**
- 4. Eat a healthy diet**
- 5. Be physically active**
- 6. Be SunSmart**
- 7. Quit smoking**

# 1. Check for unusual changes in the body and have regular screening tests

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

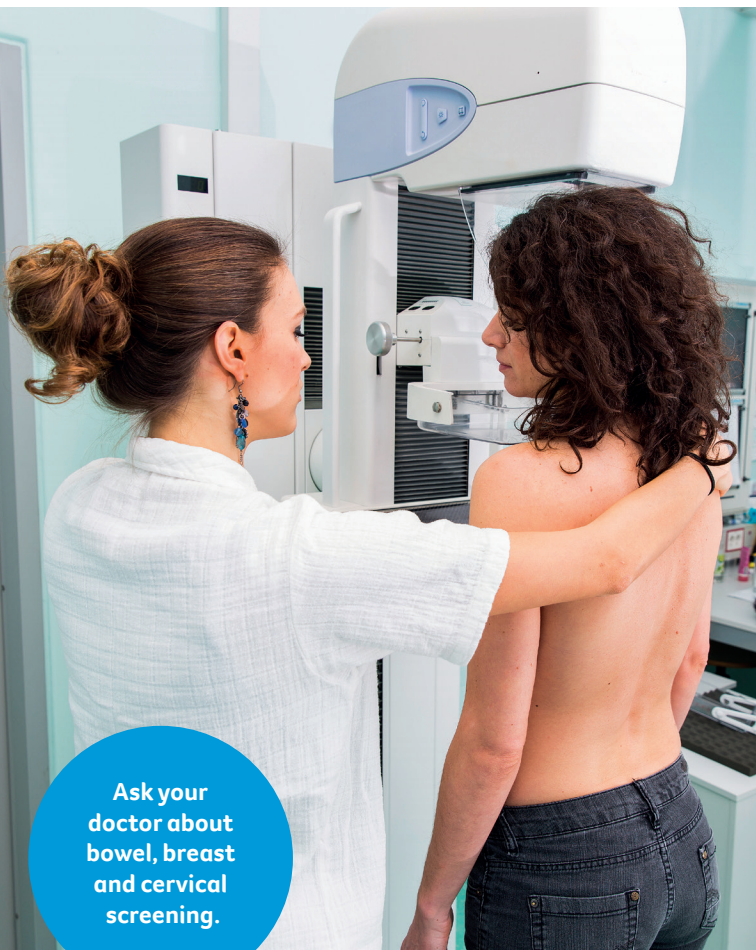
Cancer screening is an effective way of finding early changes in the body before a cancer has developed, or to find cancer in its early stages before symptoms appear.

- Men and women aged 50 and over are strongly encouraged to do a faecal occult blood test (FOBT) every two years to check for signs of bowel cancer. Free kits are sent to eligible people through the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program. Call 1800 118 868 or visit **[cancerscreening.gov.au](http://cancerscreening.gov.au)** for more information. If found early, up to 90 per cent of bowel cancers are curable.
- Women aged 50 to 74 years are strongly encouraged to have a free mammogram every two years through BreastScreen SA. Call 13 20 50 or visit **[breastscreen.sa.gov.au](http://breastscreen.sa.gov.au)** for more information or to make an appointment.
- Women are strongly encouraged to have a regular Cervical Screening Test every five years from the age of 25, even if they have had the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination. Women over 25 are due for their first Cervical Screening Test two years after their last Pap smear. Visit **[cervicalscreening.org.au](http://cervicalscreening.org.au)** for more information.

We encourage men who are concerned about prostate cancer to speak to their doctor about the benefits and limitations of the tests available.



*Illustration of the faecal occult blood test (FOBT) as provided by the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program.*



**Ask your  
doctor about  
bowel, breast  
and cervical  
screening.**

**As not all cancers have a screening test, it is important to know what is normal for you and to see your doctor if you notice any unusual changes or have any concerns, including concerns about your family history of cancer.**





#### **LOOK OUT FOR:**

- a new lump or thickening in any part of your body
- sores that don't heal
- coughs or hoarseness that won't go away
- unexplained weight loss
- unusual bleeding or discharge
- a new mole or skin spot or one 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 also talk to their doctor about their risk.**

# Immunisation

## Human Papillomavirus (HPV) and cervical cancer

The HPV vaccine helps prevent HPV-related cancers including almost all cancers of the cervix, and a proportion of cancers of the genitals and throat. In Australia, boys and girls aged 12–13 years are offered the vaccine for free as part of the School Immunisation Program. Girls who have the vaccine will still need regular cervical screening when they're older to further reduce their risk of cervical cancer. Visit [hpvvaccine.org.au](http://hpvvaccine.org.au) for more information.

## Hepatitis and liver cancer

Infection with hepatitis B is the biggest known risk factor for developing primary liver cancer. Nine out of 10 adults who become infected by hepatitis B will naturally clear the virus and develop immunity for life. Some adults, and most children in particular, cannot clear the virus and will go on to develop chronic hepatitis B. If chronic hepatitis B is not diagnosed and managed properly, it can lead to cirrhosis (scarring of the liver), liver cancer, or liver failure.

The most effective protection against hepatitis B is vaccination. In Australia, babies born after 1 May 2000 receive a free course of the hepatitis B vaccine shortly after birth as part of the National Immunisation Program.

Some people are at high risk of hepatitis B infection and are recommended to be tested and vaccinated. Hepatitis B infection may not cause any symptoms.

High risk people include:

- people from South-East Asia, Africa and the Pacific Islands
- sexually active partners of someone with hepatitis B
- people in the same household as someone with hepatitis B
- recipients of blood products
- all infants and children.

Speak with your doctor if you are concerned about your risk, as you may be eligible for a free vaccination.

For more information, visit [hepatitissa.asn.au](http://hepatitissa.asn.au)

## 2. Limit alcohol

Even drinking moderate amounts of alcohol increases the risk of cancers of the mouth, pharynx, larynx, oesophagus, liver, breast and bowel.

Alcohol consumption is linked to approximately 3,000 cancer cases in Australia each year.<sup>1</sup> All types of alcoholic beverages can increase your cancer risk.

To reduce your risk of cancer, limit your intake of alcohol or—better still—avoid it altogether. If you choose to drink alcohol, Cancer Council recommends no more than ten standard drinks per week, and no more than four standard drinks on any one day.

**One standard drink contains 10 grams of alcohol and is equal to:**

- **285ml of full-strength beer or cider (one South Australian schooner)**
- **425ml of low-alcohol beer (one South Australian pint)**
- **100ml of white, red or sparkling wine (one small glass)**
- **30ml of spirits (one nip).**

### TIPS

- **Limit alcohol to special occasions and avoid binge drinking.**
- **Drink water rather than alcoholic drinks to quench your thirst.**
- **Choose low-alcohol drinks, or dilute alcoholic drinks with soda water or juice.**
- **Aim for multiple alcohol free days every week.**
- **Eat some food while you drink alcohol.**



### 3. Maintain a healthy weight

A waistline of more than 94cm for men and 80cm for women increases the risk of some types of cancer, and the greater the waistline the higher the cancer risk.<sup>3</sup>

There is strong evidence that shows being overweight or obese throughout adulthood increases the risk of cancers of the gastro-intestinal tract, breast (postmenopause), ovary, endometrium, prostate (advanced) and kidney.<sup>3</sup>

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



#### TIPS

- Reduce food and drinks high in fat and sugar.
- Limit or avoid sugar-sweetened soft drinks, fruit juices and alcoholic drinks as they are all high in kilojoules.
- Opt for low or reduced-fat milk and dairy products from two years of age.
- Increase the amount of vegetables you have and go for leaner cuts or types of meat.
- To lose weight, try reducing the amount of food you put on your plate.

## 4. Eat a healthy diet

A healthy, balanced diet will not only give you more energy and help you to maintain a healthy weight; it can also cut your cancer risk, particularly cancers of the gastro-intestinal tract.

While there is no one food that can protect against cancer, there are steps you can take to lower your risk through a healthy, balanced diet that includes a variety of foods from the five food groups.

### TIPS

- **Aim to eat five serves of vegetables and two serves of fruit each day. A serving size is about a handful. Fruit and vegetables are low in fat and kilojoules and full of nutrients, making them an important part of our daily diet. They also naturally contain antioxidants, which can be protective against cancer-causing agents.**
- **Choose wholegrain or wholemeal foods. They are excellent sources of vitamins, minerals, protein and dietary fibre.**
- **Limit lean red meat intake to a palm-sized serve 3-4 times a week (no more than 455 grams cooked/700 grams raw per week). Swap red meat for chicken, fish or vegetarian options.**
- **Limit or avoid eating processed meats like frankfurts, salami, bacon and ham, as high consumption may increase cancer risk.**
- **Limit foods and drinks that are high in fat and sugar.**

## 5. Be physically active

Regular physical activity has been shown to reduce the risk of some cancers, including bowel and breast cancer, and can also help you maintain a healthy weight.<sup>4</sup>

One hour of moderate activity or 30 minutes of vigorous activity is recommended on five or more days per week to reduce your cancer risk.

Moderate activities include brisk walking, medium paced swimming or cycling. Vigorous activities include 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. See physical activity as an opportunity, not an inconvenience.
- Walk instead of driving to the shops and get outside during lunch breaks.
- Walk or cycle to work and take the stairs instead of 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. Consider a standing or walking meeting, or a standing desk.

## 6. Be SunSmart

Protecting yourself from the sun's ultraviolet (UV) radiation will help reduce your risk of skin cancer.

Sun protection is recommended whenever UV levels reach 3 and above. Check the daily sun protection times on the free **SunSmart app** or online at **[sunsmart.org.au](https://www.sunsmart.org.au)** to find out when UV levels will be 3 and above, and protect yourself in five ways:



**Slip on clothing that covers as much skin as possible.**



**Slop on SPF 30 or higher, broad spectrum, water resistant sunscreen 20 minutes before you go outdoors and reapply every two hours.**



**Slap on a broad brimmed hat that protects your face, head, neck and ears.**



**Seek shade.**



**Slide on sunglasses—make sure they meet the Australian standard.**



When UV levels are below 3 (typically throughout June and July in South Australia) sun protection is not recommended unless you are an outdoor worker or near highly reflective surfaces, such as snow.

#### TIPS

- **Use the five SunSmart measures in combination for the best protection.**
- **Get to know your skin and check it regularly for changes, including any areas that aren't normally exposed to the sun. If you notice anything unusual, including any change in shape, colour or size of a spot, or a new spot, visit your doctor.**
- **Regular self-checking is also important if you have naturally dark skin. Although your risk of skin cancer is lower, it is more likely to be detected at a later, more dangerous stage than for people with lighter skin.**
- **Some people are at high risk of low vitamin D. Spending time unprotected in the sun during sun protection times is not recommended, regardless of your skin tone. Talk to your doctor if you are concerned about your vitamin D levels.**

Visit **[sunsmart.org.au](https://www.sunsmart.org.au)** for more information about sun protection, skin cancer and vitamin D.

## 7. Quit smoking

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

About one in nine new cases of cancer is due to smoking.<sup>5</sup>

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.<sup>5</sup>


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 that by law, all South Australian bars, clubs, workplaces, bus stops and playgrounds are smoke free, as well as the indoor and outdoor dining areas of restaurants and cafes.

### TIPS

- **Call Quitline 13 7848 and ask to speak to a Quitline counsellor. A Quitline counsellor can help you with practical and expert advice.**
- **Visit [quitlinesa.org.au](http://quitlinesa.org.au) for information on quitting that you can read, interact with and download. You can also use Quitline webchat, our internet quitting support service, and My QuitBuddy, a personalised app to help you on your journey to become smoke free.**
- **People who have the best chance of quitting are those who use an advice and support service as well as quitting medications.**
- **Practice saying “thanks, but I don’t smoke” in case you’re offered a cigarette.**
- **Think of yourself as a non-smoker.**





The best thing  
you can do  
for your health is  
quit smoking.

## References

1. Whiteman et al 2015, *Cancers in Australia in 2010 attributable to modifiable factors: summary and conclusions*, *Australian and New Zealand Journal Public Health*, 39(5), page 477-484.
2. Cancer Council Australia Public Health Committee - Nutrition and Physical Activity Subcommittee. *National Cancer Prevention Policy: Alcohol and cancer*. Sydney: Cancer Council Australia; [updated 2012 October 31]. Available from: <http://wiki.cancer.org.au/prevention/Alcohol>, viewed 25 May 2018.
3. World Cancer Research Fund/American Institute for Cancer Research 2018, *Continuous Update Project Expert Report 2018, Body fatness and weight gain and the risk of cancer*, available from [dietandcancerreport.org](http://dietandcancerreport.org), viewed 19 July 2018.
4. Moore S et al. 2016, *Association of Leisure-Time Physical Activity With Risk of 26 Types of Cancer in 1.44 Million Adults*, *JAMA Internal Medicine* 176(6), page 816-25.
5. Pandeya N et al. 2015, *Cancers in Australia in 2010 attributable to tobacco smoke*, *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, 39(5), page 464-70.



# Cancer Council SA

For free\* and confidential information and support about cancer, Monday to Friday 8.30 am – 5.30 pm:

- call Cancer Council **13 11 20**
- chat online at **[cancersa.org.au](https://cancersa.org.au)**
- email **[askanurse@cancersa.org.au](mailto:askanurse@cancersa.org.au)**

Free\* interpreting service is available on **13 14 50**

\*Cost of a local call