

What is a cancer screening test?

A cancer screening test is designed to look for early signs of changes in the body before a cancer has developed or to find cancer in the early stages before symptoms appear. A cancer screening test is done by people who are symptom-free.

If changes are found early, there is greater chance of successful treatment than if the disease was diagnosed at a later stage.

A positive test result usually means further investigation is required to determine the presence or absence of cancer.

The Australian Government offers three national cancer screening programs to assist in the detection of early signs of bowel, breast and cervical cancer.

Cancer screening saves lives



Cancer Council SA and SA Health

This resource has been funded by the SA Cervix Screening Program, BreastScreen SA and Cancer Council SA as part of the 2017 CALD Women's Cancer Screening Ambassadors Project.



Reference

- 1 South Australian Cancer Registry (2016) *Cancer in South Australia 2013 – with projections to 2016*. Adelaide: South Australian Department for Health and Ageing.



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
- email askanurse@cancersa.org.au

Free translating service is available on **131 450**



Cancer screening

Information on the early
detection of cancer



Early
detection
of cancer

Information and support

13 11 20
cancersa.org.au



Bowel cancer screening

Bowel cancer, also known as colorectal cancer, is the second most commonly diagnosed cancer in Australian men and women. If bowel cancer is found at an early stage, treatment is more likely to be effective.

What is a bowel cancer screening test?

Screening for bowel cancer involves a simple, at-home test called a Faecal Occult Blood Test (FOBT). A FOBT looks for tiny amounts of blood in the bowel motion which are not visible to the naked eye and may be a sign of early changes in the bowel which need further investigation.

If you receive a positive FOBT, this indicates further testing is required and you should see your doctor.

Cancer Council recommends:

- if you are aged 50 years or over, participate in bowel cancer screening every two years
- if you have a family history of bowel cancer, discuss this with your doctor
- when you receive your FOBT in the post from the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program, please complete the test.

For more information call Cancer Council **13 11 20** or visit cancersa.org.au/finding-bowel-cancer-early



Breast cancer screening

Breast cancer is the most common cancer diagnosed in Australian women. Although it can occur at any age it is more common in older women. In most cases the earlier a breast cancer is diagnosed and treated, the greater the chance of successful treatment.

What is a screening mammogram?

Screening for breast cancer is done using mammography (breast X-ray). A screening mammogram highlights early changes in the breast tissue which may be so small it may not be detected by feeling the breast.

Mammograms are low-dose X-rays of a woman's breasts. Screening mammograms are currently the best method available for detecting breast cancer early.

Cancer Council recommends:

- women aged 50–74 years have a free screening mammogram every two years through BreastScreen SA
- all women, regardless of age, are encouraged to be 'breast aware' and regularly check the look and feel of their breasts
- women see their doctor as soon as possible if any breast changes are noticed e.g. a lump or nipple discharge.

For more information call Cancer Council **13 11 20**. To book a screening mammogram call **13 20 50** or visit breastscreen.sa.gov.au



Cervical screening

Cancer of the cervix is one of the most preventable of all cancers. Cervical screening can find early changes to the cells long before cancer of the cervix develops.

What is a cervical screening test?

A cervical screening test checks the health of the cervix. Cells are collected from the cervix by a doctor or trained nurse. Cell changes in the cervix are almost always caused by the Human Papillomavirus (HPV). Cell changes can be treated to prevent cervical cancer from developing.

Always see your doctor if you have any symptoms or concerns e.g. unusual bleeding and/or pain.

Cancer Council recommends:

- all women who have ever been sexually active should have a regular cervical screening test, even if they are no longer having sex
- all girls and boys aged 12 and 13 years be vaccinated against HPV. The HPV vaccine is available as part of the Schools Immunisation Program
- women, remember you still need to have a regular cervical screening test even if you have had the HPV vaccination.

For information about the eligible age range and where and when to have a cervical screening test call the SA Cervix Screening Program on **13 15 56**, email cervixscreening@health.sa.gov.au, visit sahealth.sa.gov.au/cervixscreening or call Cancer Council **13 11 20**.