

## What is a cancer screening test?

Cancer screening can help protect your health through early detection. Simple screening tests look for particular changes and early signs of cancer before it has developed or before any symptoms emerge. A cancer screening test is for people who are symptom-free.

If found early, there is a greater chance of successful treatment than if the cancer is diagnosed at a later stage. A positive test result (indicating a change) 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.

Many cancers do not have a screening program. For most cancers, it is important to be aware of what is normal for you and to see your doctor if you notice any unusual changes, or have any concerns.

## Cancer screening saves lives

Around **90%** of bowel cancers are curable if found and treated early.<sup>4</sup>

The new Cervical Screening Test is projected to further decrease cervical cancer incidence and mortality by at least **20%**.<sup>5</sup>

Since the introduction of breast cancer screening, it is estimated that the mortality from breast cancer has reduced by up to **28%**.<sup>6</sup>

## About Cancer Council SA

Cancer Council SA is South Australia's leading, independent, non-government cancer control organisation. We are dedicated to helping South Australians reduce their cancer risk and receive the best cancer care.

## Mission

To lead, empower and mobilise the community to contribute to a cancer free future.

### References

- 1 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2019, Cancer data in Australia 2019. Cancer series no. 119. Cat.no CAN 123.Canberra: AIHW
- 2 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare & Cancer Australia 2018, BreastScreen Australia monitoring report 2018. Cancer series no. 112. Cat. no. CAN 116. Canberra: AIHW.
- 3 Cancer Council Australia 2018, National Cancer Control Policy: Cervical cancer screening. Available from: <[https://wiki.cancer.org.au/policy/Cervical\\_cancer/Screening](https://wiki.cancer.org.au/policy/Cervical_cancer/Screening)> [6 June 2019].
- 4 Cancer Council Australia 2018, National Cancer Control Policy: Bowel cancer screening. Available from: <[https://wiki.cancer.org.au/policy/Bowel\\_cancer/Screening](https://wiki.cancer.org.au/policy/Bowel_cancer/Screening)> [6 June 2019].
- 5 Lew, JB, Simms KT, Smith MA, Hall M, Kang YJ, Xu XM, Caruana M, Velentzis LS, Bessell T, Saville M, Hammond I 2017. 'Primary HPV testing versus cytology-based cervical screening in women in Australia vaccinated for HPV and unvaccinated: effectiveness and economic assessment for the National Cervical Screening Program', The Lancet, vol. 2, no. 2, pp.96-107.
- 6 Cancer Council Australia. National Cancer Control Policy. Accessed online 28 November 2017: [http://wiki.cancer.org.au/policy/Breast\\_cancer/Screening#Mortality\\_reduction](http://wiki.cancer.org.au/policy/Breast_cancer/Screening#Mortality_reduction).



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](http://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

SEP 2019



## Cancer screening

Information on the early detection of cancer



Early detection of cancer

Information and support

**13 11 20**  
[cancersa.org.au](http://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.<sup>1</sup> If bowel cancer is found at an early stage, treatment is more likely to be effective.**

### What is a bowel cancer screening test?

You can screen for bowel cancer using a simple, at-home test called a Faecal Occult Blood Test (FOBT). An FOBT looks for tiny amounts of blood in the bowel motion, which may be a sign of early changes in the bowel.

Cancer Council recommends:

- completing an FOBT every two years if you are aged 50 years or over. The National Bowel Cancer Screening Program posts free FOBT kits to eligible people aged 50–74. Simply complete and return your kit via the mail. For more information about the program, including replacement kits, call the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program infoline on 1800 118 868
- discussing symptoms or any family history of bowel cancer with your GP, no matter your age.

For more information, call Cancer Council **13 11 20** or visit [cancersa.org.au/finding-bowel-cancer-early](https://cancersa.org.au/finding-bowel-cancer-early)



## Breast cancer screening

**Breast cancer is the most common cancer diagnosed in Australian women.<sup>1</sup> Although it can occur at any age, it is more common in older women, with more than 75 per cent of cases occurring in women aged over 50.<sup>2</sup> In most cases, the earlier a breast cancer is diagnosed and treated, the greater the chance of successful treatment.**

### What is a screening mammogram?

A screening mammogram is a low-dose breast X-ray. It highlights early changes in the breast tissue, including those that are too small to be felt. A screening mammogram is currently the best method available for detecting breast cancer early.

Cancer Council recommends:

- having a free screening mammogram every two years through BreastScreen SA if you're a woman aged 50–74 years. Women aged in their 40s and over 75 years are also eligible for free screening through BreastScreen
- being 'breast aware', which involves all women, regardless of age, regularly checking the look and feel of their breasts
- seeing your GP if you notice any breast changes, such as a lump or nipple discharge.

For more information, call Cancer Council **13 11 20**, or visit [breastscreen.sa.gov.au](https://breastscreen.sa.gov.au). To book a free screening mammogram, call **13 20 50**.



## Cervical screening

**Cancer of the cervix is one of the most preventable cancers, as precancerous cells can be detected through screening.<sup>3</sup>**

### What is a Cervical Screening Test?

A Cervical Screening Test is a simple test that checks the health of the cervix. The test detects the presence of Human Papillomavirus (HPV), a common infection that can cause cervical cell changes that may lead to cervical cancer. Early changes can be treated to prevent cervical cancer from developing.

Cancer Council recommends:

- participating in routine cervical screening if aged 25–74 through your GP, or women's health clinic. Screening begins at age 25. If you're aged 25 and over, your first test is due two years after your last Pap smear. After that you will only need to have the test every five years if your results are normal
- vaccinating girls and boys aged 12–13 against HPV as part of the School Immunisation Program. However, women still require regular cervical screening from age 25 if they have received the HPV vaccination
- seeing your GP if you have any symptoms or concerns, such as unusual bleeding and/or pain, no matter your age or when you had your last Cervical Screening Test.

For information about the Cervical Screening Test, call the SA Cervix Screening Program on **13 15 56**, visit [cervicalscreening.org.au](https://cervicalscreening.org.au), or call Cancer Council **13 11 20**.