



**Cancer  
Council**  
SA

# **Cut your breast cancer risk.**



Three ways  
to help  
prevent breast  
cancer

Information and support

**13 11 20**

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

## Breast cancer

Did you know that breast cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer (excluding non-melanoma skin cancer) and the second most common cause of cancer death in Australian women?<sup>(1)</sup>

With one in seven Australian women developing breast cancer by their 85th birthday, it's no wonder that directly or indirectly more Australian families are likely to be affected by breast cancer than any other type of cancer.<sup>(2)</sup>

This statistic demonstrates how common breast cancer is, but the good news is that around 40 per cent of breast cancers in Australia can be potentially prevented by making some simple lifestyle changes.<sup>(3)</sup>

In most people, the exact cause of breast cancer is unknown, but some factors can increase the risk. Having risk factors does not necessarily mean you will develop breast cancer.

*“Unless trends in dietary risk, overweight and obesity are curbed, they are projected to overtake tobacco as the leading preventable causes of cancer. We urgently need to act.”*

—Professor Caroline Miller, Cancer Council  
Beat Cancer Project funded researcher  
Administering institution: University of Adelaide  
and SAHMRI

## Breast cancer prevention

There are a number of factors that play a role in breast cancer risk. Some of these factors are modifiable—such as lifestyle choices—and others are non-modifiable—such as age, sex, family history and genetics.

### Modifiable risk factors

The three lifestyle factors that have been shown to reduce breast cancer risk include:<sup>(3)</sup>



**Maintaining a healthy body weight**



**Making sure you get enough physical activity**



**Avoiding or limiting alcohol consumption**

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## 1. Maintaining a healthy weight

There is strong evidence that carrying excess body weight increases the risk of developing post-menopausal breast cancer. In particular, excess weight around the abdomen and waist carries a greater risk than weight carried on the hips and thighs.

### **How do you know if your body weight is increasing your risk?**

Check your waist circumference. A waist circumference of more than 80 cm for women increases the risk of breast cancer, and the greater the waist circumference, the higher the cancer risk.<sup>(4)</sup>

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

Whilst maintaining a healthy weight is the long-term goal, sometimes the best place to begin is to focus on preventing any weight gain first.



## Measure your waist circumference:

- Find the top of your hip bone and the bottom of your ribs.
- Place a tape measure midway between these points and wrap it around your waist.
- Breathe out normally and check your measurement in centimetres.



No elevated risk	80 cm or less
High risk	80 – 88 cm
Substantially high risk	More than 88 cm

A waist circumference of more than 80cm increases the risk of breast cancer.



**Serves:** 2

**Preparation time:** 10 minutes

**Cook time:** 30 minutes

### Ingredients

- 1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 4 baby red potatoes, halved
- 2 x 100 g chicken breasts
- 1 tsp Cajun spice
- 1 bunch asparagus, steamed
- 2 cups rocket leaves
- 1 orange, segmented
- 30 g slivered almonds, roasted

For dressing

- 1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- ½ tbsp balsamic vinegar
- ½ lemon, juiced
- Cracked pepper

### Method

1. Season potatoes with oil and pepper. Oven bake at 180°C until golden.
2. Coat chicken breasts with Cajun spice. Heat oil in pan, sear chicken and cook through.
3. Combine oil, balsamic vinegar and lemon. Drizzle dressing over rocket, orange, asparagus and almonds.
4. Top salad with chicken and potatoes.

For more recipes head to [cancersa.org.au/prevention/lifestyle-factors/recipes/](https://cancersa.org.au/prevention/lifestyle-factors/recipes/)

## TIPS

- Get portion sizes right by packing meals with plenty of non-starchy veggies such as broccoli, carrots and beans (see portion plate below).
- Choose a vegetable based snack each day, e.g. veggie sticks and hummus; grainy crackers with avocado, tomato and cucumber.
- Eat plenty of fibre rich foods. Grainy breads and cereals, fruits, vegetables, and lentils will help keep you feeling fuller for longer.
- Limit food and drinks high in fat and sugar, e.g. cakes, biscuits, lollies, chips, takeaway, sugary drinks.
- Be physically active, for tips see page 9.
- Avoid or limit alcohol, for tips see page 10.



*How to portion your plate—a guide for lunch and dinner.*

## 2. Be physically active

Being physically active reduces breast cancer risk in two ways—indirectly by helping women to maintain a healthy weight, and directly by the physical effects that the exercise has on our body, regardless of body composition.

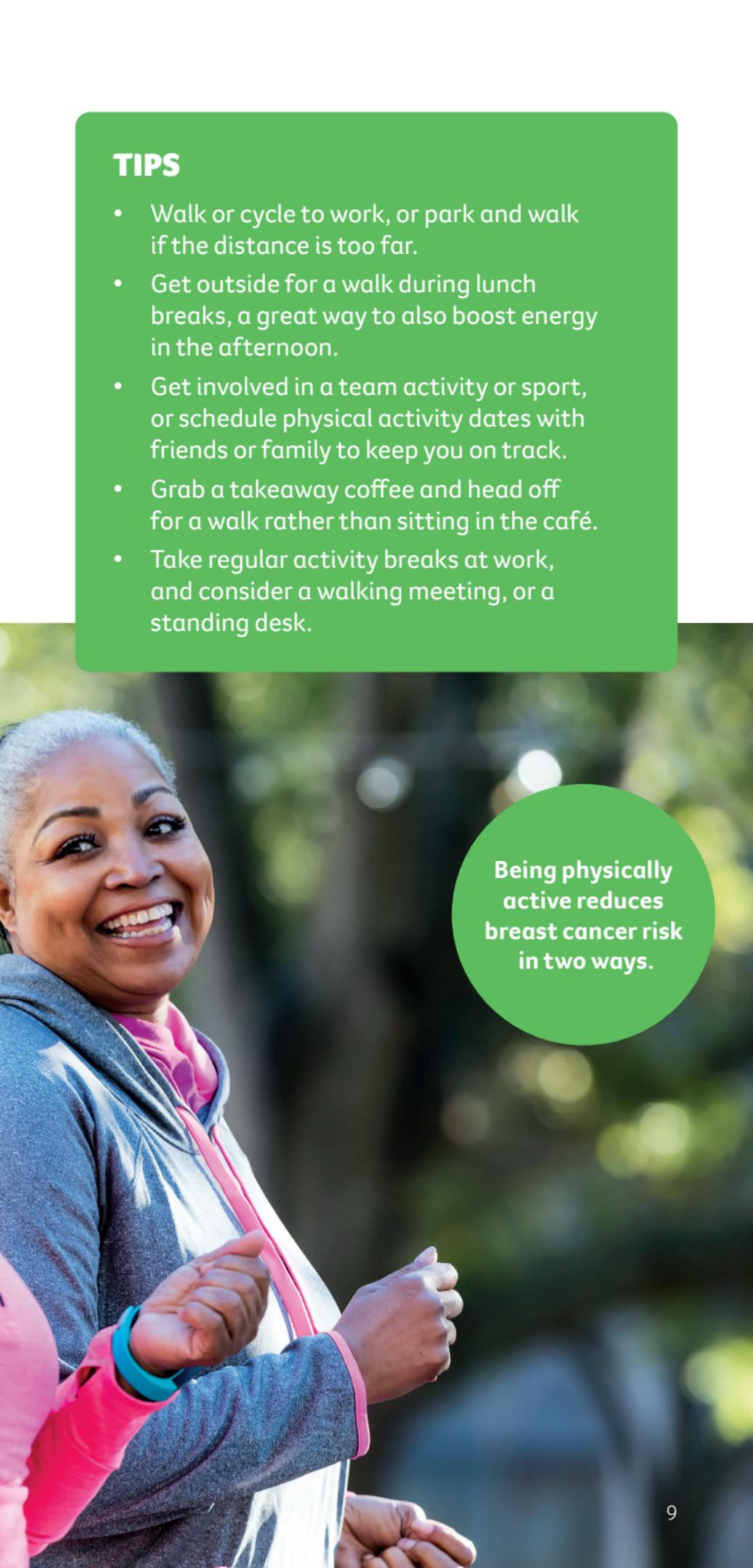
To reduce your breast cancer risk, aim for at least 60 minutes of moderate activity or 30 minutes of vigorous activity on five or more days per week. The more you do, the lower the risk of breast cancer.

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

- Walk or cycle to work, or park and walk if the distance is too far.
- Get outside for a walk during lunch breaks, a great way to also boost energy in the afternoon.
- Get involved in a team activity or sport, or schedule physical activity dates with friends or family to keep you on track.
- Grab a takeaway coffee and head off for a walk rather than sitting in the café.
- Take regular activity breaks at work, and consider a walking meeting, or a standing desk.



Being physically active reduces breast cancer risk in two ways.

### 3. Avoid or limit alcohol

Alcohol consumption is associated with an increased risk of breast cancer. The link between alcohol consumption and breast cancer is dose dependent. While even light levels of consumption are associated with breast cancer risk, the risk increases the more you drink.

Alcohol is also high in calories and so are some of the mixers used to make some alcoholic drinks. Regular alcohol consumption can make it more difficult to maintain a healthy weight, so it can also indirectly increase your breast cancer risk.

To reduce your risk of alcohol related cancer, limit your intake of alcohol or—better still—avoid it all together.

#### **TIPS**

- Limit alcohol to special occasions and avoid binge drinking.
- Opt for low-alcohol drinks, or dilute alcoholic drinks with sparkling water or juice.
- Choose a mocktail instead—but be cautious of mixers as they can be high in calories. See our Berry Spritz recipe for inspiration.
- Order beer and cider in a smaller glass, e.g. a South Australian 'schooner' or 'butcher' rather than a pint.
- Alternate alcoholic drinks with non-alcoholic ones, such as sparkling water garnished with lemon or lime.



## Berry Spritz

### Ingredients

- 1 litre soda water
- ½ lemon, sliced into thin wedges
- ½ cup of raspberries
- 1 punnet of strawberries, hulled and cut in half
- Handful of fresh mint leaves
- Ice (crushed if possible)
- Extra mint and lemon wedges for garnishing

### Method

1. Muddle mint, lemon and berries in a jug.
2. Add ice to the jug before adding soda water.
3. Serve in glasses and garnish with the extra lemon and mint.



To reduce your risk of cancer, limit your intake of alcohol.

## References

1. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Cancer data in Australia. Canberra: AIHW; 2019 Jul 26 [cited 2019 Aug 25]. Report No.: Cat. no: CAN 122. Available from: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/cancer/cancer-data-in-australia/contents/summary>
2. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Cancer in Australia 2019. Cancer series no. 119. Cat no. CAN 123. 2019, AIHW: Canberra.
3. Baade PD, Meng X, Sinclair C, Youl P. Estimating the future burden of cancers preventable by better diet and physical activity in Australia. *Med J Aust* 2012 Mar 19;196(5):337-40 Abstract available at <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22432673>.
4. World Health Organisation, Obesity: Preventing and managing the global epidemic, 2000. Available from [https://www.who.int/nutrition/publications/obesity/WHO\\_TRS\\_894/en/](https://www.who.int/nutrition/publications/obesity/WHO_TRS_894/en/)



For free\* and confidential information and support about cancer, Monday to Friday 9.00 am – 5.00 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