

# Reducing Your Cancer Risk



**LIFESTYLE 6**  
Reduce your risk



An initiative of  
**Cancer  
Council**  
Queensland

## You can reduce your cancer risk through simple lifestyle changes



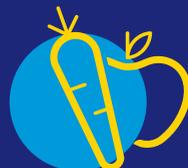
**Be smoke free**



**Use sun protection**



**Be physically active**



**Eat a healthy diet**



**Limit alcohol**



**Know your body**



**Participate in cancer screening**



## Stop smoking

**The best thing you can do for your health is to quit smoking. More than 20,500 Australians die from smoking-related diseases each year.**

Smoking can cause many cancers. These include cancer of the lung, mouth, throat, colon, stomach, pancreas, kidney, vulva, penis and bladder.

The good news is that it's never too late to stop. Stopping smoking has immediate and long-term benefits. Everyone who smokes benefits from stopping, no matter their age or if they already have a smoking related illness.

Getting help can improve your chance of quitting. Enlist the support of your family and friends. Or call Quitline on 13 QUIT (13 7848) for free information, practical assistance and support. Quitline's trained counsellors are available 7am – 10pm to help you through the process of stopping smoking.

Visit [quitnow.gov.au](http://quitnow.gov.au) for advice and information on quitting, or visit [quitcoach.org.au](http://quitcoach.org.au) for a free personalised plan to help you stop smoking.

Avoid second-hand smoke. Even if you don't smoke, breathing in other people's cigarette smoke can increase your risk of cancer. Make sure you and your family are smoke-free.

### Action plan to stop smoking:

- Call Quitline on 13 QUIT (13 7848).
- Discuss stopping smoking with a GP, pharmacist or community health worker and plan your quitting strategy together.
- To increase your chance of success, combine counselling support and stop-smoking medications.

**Visit [cancerqld.org.au](http://cancerqld.org.au) for more information.**

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 'Australian Burden of Disease Study 2018: Interactive data on risk factor burden', <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/burden-of-disease/abds-2018-interactive-data-risk-factors/contents/tobacco-use>

## Be SunSmart and protect your skin

Protecting your skin from the sun reduces your risk of developing skin cancer.

Every year, over 300 Queenslanders die from skin cancer. Skin cancer is almost totally preventable. Skin can burn in as little as 10 minutes in the Queensland sun. The longer you expose your unprotected skin to the sun, the greater your risk of getting skin cancer.

When you choose a sunscreen make sure it has broad spectrum protection, an SPF of 30+ or above, and is water resistant. Apply sunscreen at least 20 minutes before heading outdoors and always apply enough sunscreen. You should use at least 5ml (approximately one teaspoon) for each arm, leg, body front, body back and face (including neck and ears). You need to reapply every two hours, or more frequently if swimming, sweating, or towel-drying.

Check the use-by date of the product to make sure it will still be effective to protect you.

Solariums are not a safe way to tan your skin. No tan is healthy. Solariums expose you to damaging ultraviolet rays that can be up to five times stronger than the summer midday sun. Solarium use increases your risk of skin cancer

### Action plan to be SunSmart when UV levels are 3 and above:

- **Slip** on sun protective clothing that covers as much skin as possible.
- **Slop** on sunscreen. Cover exposed parts of your body with SPF 30+ or above sunscreen, 20 minutes before going out in the sun.
- **Slap** on a broad-brimmed or bucket style hat. Wear a hat that shades your face, neck and ears.
- **Seek** shade whenever you can, especially when UV radiation is highest – usually between 10am and 3pm.
- **Slide** on wrap-around sunglasses that meet Australian standards.

Develop a habit of checking your skin. See your doctor immediately if you have a freckle, mole or lump that is NEW or CHANGING in size, shape or colour, or a sore that does not heal over four to six weeks.



## Move your Body

**Physical activity has many health benefits.**

Physical activity helps prevent a range of health problems, including some cancers. To reduce the risk of some cancers, including bowel, breast (after menopause) and endometrium, the more active you are the better.

**Australia's National Physical Activity Guidelines recommend accumulating:**

- 150–300 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity per week, or
- 75–150 minutes of vigorous intensity physical activity per week, or
- a combination of these two.

Moderate intensity physical activity requires some effort, but you can still talk, for example brisk walking or mowing the lawn.

Vigorous intensity activity makes you 'huff and puff' for example running and aerobics.

Being active is not just planned exercise – you should aim to move your body throughout the day.

Total exercise each day does not need to be continuous. Physical activity can be in smaller bouts of exercise, with a minimum of 10 minutes at a time.

**Action plan to be physically active:**

- See exercise as an opportunity, not an inconvenience.
- Be active throughout the day, such as taking the stairs and walking in your lunch break.
- Walk, cycle to work, or get off public transport one stop early and walk the rest of the way.
- Do something you enjoy or can do with a friend, such as tennis, swimming or dancing.
- Increase your physical activity gradually.
- If you haven't exercised for a while, talk to your doctor before starting.



## Maintain a healthy weight

**Maintaining a healthy weight is important for your health.**

Being overweight or obese increases the risk of certain cancers. These include cancer of the breast (after menopause), bowel, endometrium oesophagus, pancreas, kidney, cervix, thyroid, ovary, uterus and liver.

Eating a balanced diet and being more active are two of the best ways to stay within a healthy weight range and reduce your risk of cancer.

### Is your weight healthy?

Measure your waist at the narrowest point to find out if your weight is healthy. If this is not obvious, then measure at the belly button level. Aim for a waist measurement under 80 cm for women and under 94 cm for men. If your waist is above 88 cm for women and 102 cm for men irrespective of your height, you are at risk of developing a chronic disease such as some cancers, heart disease and diabetes.

### What is Body Mass Index (BMI)?

Your BMI is another way of measuring whether you are in the healthy weight range. It is calculated by dividing your weight (in kilograms) by your height (in metres squared). Then compare your result to the BMI table below. A BMI of 25 or more means it is time to take action for better health and to reduce your risk of cancer and chronic disease.

### BMI Classification

**Below 18.5: Underweight • 18.5 – 25: Healthy weight  
25 – 30: Overweight • Greater than 30: Obese**

### Action plan for staying in shape:

- Eat a healthy diet full of fruit, vegetables, and wholegrains.
- Be active in line with the Physical Activity Guidelines.
- Limit consumption of junk foods and sugary drinks.



## Healthy eating

**Healthy eating habits are an important step in reducing your cancer risk.**

Eating plenty of fruit, vegetables and legumes (for example beans, lentils and chickpeas) is important for your health. They may help protect against some cancers, especially cancers of the digestive system. Try to eat at least five serves of vegetables and two serves of fruit a day.

Eat plenty of wholegrain and wholemeal foods every day. They are important because they are an excellent source of dietary fibre.

Lean red meat is an important part of a balanced diet but it should be limited to no more than 455 grams a week. Choose alternative options such as lean chicken, fish and legumes. Avoid processed meats, such as ham, bacon, sausages and salami, which are high in fat and salt. Eating processed meats and too much red meat has been linked to an increased risk of bowel cancer.

### Action plan to eat for health:

- Aim for two serves of fruit and five serves of vegetables every day.
- Eat a variety of wholegrain cereals, breads and pastas.
- Choose fish, poultry or legumes instead of red meat for some meals.
- Choose foods low in salt, sugar and saturated fat.
- Limit consumption of energy-dense foods.

## Limit alcohol consumption

Alcohol is classed as a type 1 carcinogen – a known substance that causes cancer. Drinking alcohol can increase your risk of alcohol related cancer. These include cancer of the bowel, breast, mouth, pharynx, larynx, oesophagus and liver.

If you choose to drink alcohol, Cancer Council recommends drinking within the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Guidelines to Reduce Health Risks from Drinking Alcohol. For healthy adults, this means that you drink no more than four standard drinks in any one day AND no more than 10 standard drinks in a week.

### A standard drink equals:

- 100 ml of wine (one bottle of wine contains about seven standard drinks).
- 285 ml (1 middy) or full-strength beer.
- 425 ml (1 schooner) of low alcohol beer.
- 30 ml (1 nip) of spirits.
- 60 ml (2 nips) of sherry.
- 200-250 ml alcoholic soda (2/3 bottle).
- Cocktails may contain more than three standard drinks!

### Action plan for limiting alcohol:

- Choose low alcohol drinks.
- Dilute alcoholic drinks, for example try a wine spritzer (wine and soda water).
- Use water to quench your thirst and sip alcohol drinks slowly.
- Avoid binge drinking. Eat healthy snacks while you drink alcohol.
- Alternate between alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks.

The combined effects of smoking and alcohol increase the risk of cancer more than just smoking or drinking alone. Up to 75 % of cancers of the upper airway and digestive system can be related to the combined use of alcohol and smoking.



## Ask about cancer screening

Cancer screening can help detect cancer early, before it develops or before symptoms appear.

### BOWEL CANCER

Bowel cancer is the second most common cause of cancer death in Australia. If detected early, approximately 90% of cases can be treated.

Everyone aged 50-74 years should complete a faecal occult blood test (FOBT) every two years to detect the early signs and symptoms of bowel cancer.

The National Bowel Screening Program will send eligible people a free FOBT kit in the mail.

See your doctor as soon as possible if you have any symptoms such as:

- change in bowel habit
- abdominal pain
- blood after a bowel motion.

For more information talk to your doctor about bowel cancer screening or, contact the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program Helpline on **1800 118 868** or go to **[cancerscreening.gov.au/bowel](http://cancerscreening.gov.au/bowel)**.

### BREAST CANCER

Early detection of breast cancer provides the best chance of treatment and survival.

Become familiar with the usual look and feel of your breast and if you notice any changes, see your doctor as soon as possible.

BreastScreen invites all women aged 50 to 74 to have a free screening mammogram every two years. Women aged 40 to 49 or 75 and over can also attend.

Book an appointment with BreastScreen Queensland by calling **13 20 50** or go to **[breastscreen.qld.gov.au](http://breastscreen.qld.gov.au)**.

## CERVICAL CANCER

The Cervical Screening Test replaced the Pap test in 2017. You are eligible for the test if you are:

- aged between 25 and 74 years
- have ever been sexually active
- are a woman or person with a cervix

Under the National Cervical Screening Program (NCSP), you are eligible for your first test when you turn 25, or two years after your last Pap test. You will then have a Cervical Screening Test every five years after that. The test is needed even if you have had the HPV vaccine.

As part of the program, there is a self-collection option. The sample is taken with a long cotton swab and is done under the supervision of a healthcare professional. You will be given instructions and offered a private place to collect your sample.

Self-collection is an option currently available for women who are 30 years of age or over and have never participated in the NCSP, or are more than two years overdue for cervical screening.

From 1 July 2022, all women and people with a cervix screened under the NCSP will have the choice of either self-collection or a clinician-collected sample. Both screening options will still be accessed through your healthcare provider.

If you have symptoms such as unusual bleeding, discharge and pain see your doctor as soon as possible.

For more information contact [cancerscreening.gov.au/cervical](https://cancerscreening.gov.au/cervical)

## PROSTATE CANCER

There is no single, simple test for prostate cancer. Two commonly used tests are the prostate specific antigen (PSA) blood test by your GP and the digital rectal examination (DRE) by a urologist. These tests, use separately or together, only show changes in the prostate. They do not detect cancer.

Talk to your GP about prostate cancer and make an informed decision about whether you should be tested.

## Want to know more?

For more information, talk to your doctor, or call Cancer Council **13 11 20**.

Cancer Council 13 11 20 is there to help you with cancer information, support and counselling.

Anyone can call Cancer Council Queensland's 13 11 20 Information and Support line – people living with cancer, their families, carers and friends, or those wanting information on reducing their cancer risk, including teachers, students and healthcare professionals.

This confidential service is available Monday to Friday, 9am – 5pm (excluding public holidays). The service is provided thanks to the generous support of Queenslanders.



**We're here for all Queenslanders  
affected by all cancers.**

**For cancer support or information**



**Phone:** 13 11 20



**Email:** [131120@cancerqld.org.au](mailto:131120@cancerqld.org.au)



**Webchat:** [cancerqld.org.au/chat](https://cancerqld.org.au/chat)



**Web:** [cancerqld.org.au](https://cancerqld.org.au)



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