

Cut your cancer risk

1. Check for unusual changes and have regular screening tests

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

Look out for:

- lumps or sores that don't heal
- coughs or hoarseness that won't go away
- unexplained weight loss
- a mole or skin spot that changes shape, size or colour
- changes in your toilet habits or blood in a bowel motion.

Chances are you won't have cancer but it's important to get checked out.

Screening can find cancer early:

- Women aged 50–69 years are encouraged to have a mammogram for **breast cancer** every two years (call BreastScreen on 13 20 50 to book an appointment).
- Women aged 18–70 years are encouraged to have a Pap test every two years to detect early changes that, if left untreated, can lead to **cervical cancer**. Visit www.papscreen.org.au for more information.
- Men and women over 50 are encouraged to do a test for **bowel cancer** every two years. Visit www.cancervic.org.au/boweltest or speak to your doctor.

Men who are concerned about prostate cancer should speak to their doctor to help them decide whether testing is right for them. Visit www.prostatehealth.org.au for more information.

Immunisation: As well as having a regular Pap test, girls and women can help prevent cervical cancer by having the cervical cancer vaccine. Speak to your doctor or visit www.cervicalcancervaccine.org.au.

2. Maintain a healthy weight

A waistline of around 100 cm for men and 85 cm for women increases the risk of some types of cancer, including bowel, breast and oesophagus cancers.

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

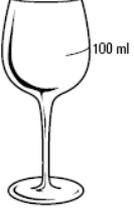
Tips:

- Reduce food and drinks high in fat and sugar.
- Limit alcoholic drinks as they are high in calories.
- Choose non-fat or reduced fat milk and dairy products.
- Choose fish, poultry or vegetarian options instead of red meat for some meals.
- If your weight is increasing you may need to reduce the amount of food you put on your plate.

3. Limit alcohol

Even moderate amounts of alcohol increase the risk of cancers of the mouth, pharynx, larynx, oesophagus, liver, breast and bowel. To reduce the risk of cancer, limit your intake of alcohol or, better still, avoid it altogether. People who choose to drink alcohol should drink no more than two standard drinks and have at least one or two alcohol-free days every week.

One standard drink is roughly equal to:

285 ml of beer (one glass of beer)	100 ml of wine (one small glass of wine)	30 ml of spirits (one measure of spirits)
		

There is no evidence to suggest that alcoholic drinks (such as red wine) protect against any type of cancer.

Tips:

- If you do choose to drink alcoholic drinks, limit to special occasions.
- Drink water rather than alcohol when thirsty.
- Dilute alcoholic drinks. For example, try a shandy (beer and lemonade), white wine and mineral water, or spirits and low-calorie soft drinks.
- Choose low-alcohol drinks.

4. Eat a healthy diet

Fruit and vegetables are low in fat and calories and help maintain a healthy body weight.

They may also protect against cancer of the mouth, throat, oesophagus, stomach, bowel and lung.

Eating red meat and, in particular, processed meat, may increase the risk of bowel cancer. Eat wholegrain breads and cereals as part of a healthy diet and to maintain a healthy body weight.

Tips:

- Aim to eat five servings of vegetables and two servings of fruit each day. A serve size is about a handful.
- Limit red meat intake to three or four serves a week. One serve should roughly fit into the palm of your hand.
- Limit or avoid eating processed meats like sausages, frankfurts, salami, bacon and ham.

5. Be physically active

Regular activity reduces the risk of bowel and breast cancers.

One hour of moderate activity or 30 minutes of vigorous activity is recommended on most days for general health and fitness.

Moderate activities include brisk walking, medium-paced swimming or cycling.

Vigorous activity includes active sports like football, tennis and basketball and activities such as aerobics, dancing, jogging and fast cycling.

Tips:

- Be active in as many ways as you can. See activity as an opportunity.
- Walk instead of driving to the shops and walk in your lunch breaks.
- Walk or cycle to work and walk up stairs instead of taking the lift or escalator.
- Do something you enjoy or can do with a friend, like tennis, swimming or dancing.
- If you sit down a lot at work, take regular breaks to move around as much as possible throughout the day.

6. Be SunSmart

It is important to balance the risk of skin cancer with maintaining adequate vitamin D levels.

In Victoria from **September to April**, most Victorians only need a few minutes of sun each day to get enough vitamin D (outside peak UV hours).

To protect yourself:

1. **Slip** on some sun-protective clothing.
2. **Slop** on SPF30+ broad spectrum water resistant sunscreen 20 minutes before you go outdoors and every two hours afterwards.
3. **Slap** on a hat that protects your face, head, neck and ears.
4. **Seek** shade.
5. **Slide** on some sunglasses – make sure they meet Australian standards.

From **May to August** most people need two to three hours of sun exposure weekly for vitamin D. Sun protection generally isn't required unless you are at the snow or outside for long periods.

People with naturally very dark skin need three to six times these exposure levels in each time period.

Tips:

- Look for the SunSmart UV Alert at www.sunsmart.com.au or on the weather page of your daily newspaper to find out the day's ultraviolet (UV) radiation levels.
- Check your skin regularly, at least every three months, to detect any skin changes.
- See your doctor if you have a sore that doesn't heal, a mole that has suddenly appeared or started to bleed, or one that has changed its size, thickness, shape or colour.

- Some people are more at risk of low vitamin D. Talk to your doctor if you are concerned about your vitamin D levels.
- Visit www.sunsmart.com.au for more information.

7. Quit smoking

About one in five deaths from cancer are due to smoking. More than 10,000 Australians are diagnosed with a smoking-related cancer every year.

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

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.

Tips:

- Call the Quitline on 13 78 48 and ask to speak to an advisor. A trained Quitline advisor can help you with practical and expert advice.
- Visit www.quit.org.au for advice and information on quitting. You can also use the Quit Coach, an Internet coach that can advise you based on your own situation.
- Think of yourself as a non-smoker.

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