



Men and Cancer

A guide to reducing your risk of cancer



For information and support, call
13 11 20 or visit **cancercouncil.com.au**

Finding cancer early

It's estimated that in 2020 about 77,000 new cases of cancer will be diagnosed in Australian men.[†] One in two men will be diagnosed with cancer by the age of 85.

Men are more likely than women to be diagnosed with cancer. Men also die at higher rates than women from cancers that can be prevented. This may be because men are more likely to smoke tobacco, drink alcohol and be overweight, and are less likely to seek help from their GP (general practitioner), which can lead to delays in treatment.

The good news is that there are steps you can take to reduce your risk of getting cancer or to help find cancer early. The earlier cancer is found, the better the chances of successful treatment.

Many cancers can be treated successfully. About 70% of men with cancer will be alive five years after their diagnosis. Many of these men live much longer than that.

This brochure provides information about:

- common cancers in men
- healthy lifestyle tips to lower your risk of cancer
- steps you can take to help find cancer early.

[†] Not including non-melanoma skin cancers



What is cancer?

Cancer is a disease of the cells. Cells are the body's basic building blocks – they make up tissue and organs. The body constantly makes new cells to help us grow, replace worn-out tissue and heal injuries.

Normally, cells multiply and die in an orderly way, so that each new cell replaces one lost. Sometimes, cells become abnormal and keep growing. In solid cancers, such as prostate or bowel cancer, the abnormal cells form a mass or lump called a tumour. In other cancers, such as leukaemia or myeloma, the abnormal cells build up in the blood.

There are more than 200 different types of cancer. The most common cancers in men are non-melanoma skin, prostate, melanoma, bowel (colorectal), lung, and head and neck.

What is cancer screening?

Screening is organised testing to find cancer in people before any symptoms appear. Screening programs can find cancer early, when it is smaller and easier to treat. However, screening tests can have risks, so it is important that the benefits of any screening program outweigh the harms.

Australia has national screening programs for breast, cervical and bowel cancers. These are currently the only cancers in which organised screening has been shown to be effective.

Trials are ongoing into the effectiveness of screening programs for other cancers. For more information, talk to your GP or call Cancer Council **13 11 20**.

This information brochure is based on guidance for male bodies. If you identify as non-binary or transgender, much of it will be relevant, but your experience may be different.

Reducing your risk

There is no way to guarantee you won't get cancer, but evidence shows that up to one-third of cancers can be prevented by making healthy lifestyle choices.

Quit smoking



Better still, never start; and avoid second-hand smoke. There is no safe level of tobacco use. Smoking increases the chances of developing many types of cancer and is the biggest preventable cause of cancer.

Quitting smoking at any age will benefit your health. For support, speak to your GP, call the Quitline on **13 7848** or visit icanquit.com.au.

Be SunSmart

Ultraviolet (UV) levels in NSW are high enough to damage unprotected skin at least 10 months of the year. Download the free SunSmart app to check UV levels where you live. When UV levels are 3 or above, protect yourself from the sun:

- **Slip** on clothing that covers your body
- **Slop** on SPF30+ or ideally SPF50+ broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen
- **Slap** on a hat that protects your face, ears and neck
- **Seek** shade whenever you can
- **Slide** on sunglasses that meet Australian/New Zealand Standards



Maintain a healthy body weight



Being overweight or obese can increase your risk of many different cancers, including bowel and stomach cancers. Keeping your weight within the healthy range and avoiding weight gain as an adult is an important way to reduce your cancer risk.

Be physically active and sit less

Aim for 60 minutes of moderate exercise or 30 minutes of vigorous exercise on most days. This is one of the most important ways you can reduce your risk of bowel cancer.





Reduce your alcohol intake

Drinking alcohol increases the risk of many cancers. Alcohol contains a lot of energy (kilojoules or calories), so it can also make you gain weight. If you choose to drink alcohol, stick to the National Health and Medical Research Council guidelines (visit nhmrc.gov.au).

Eat less red and processed meat

Eating processed meat (e.g. salami, ham and bacon) and eating too much red meat increases the risk of bowel cancer. Aim for no more than one small serve of lean red meat per day or two serves on 3–4 days a week. Avoid processed meat.



Eat plenty of vegetables, fruit and legumes

Vegetables, fruit and legumes (e.g. beans, lentils, peas) contain dietary fibre, vitamins and minerals that can help protect against cancer. They also help prevent weight gain. Aim for two serves of fruit and five serves of vegetables or legumes a day.

Eat a variety of wholegrain, wholemeal and high-fibre cereals, breads and pasta

People who eat wholegrain and high-fibre foods regularly are less likely to develop bowel cancer. Aim for 4–6 serves of bread and cereal foods each day, with at least two-thirds as wholemeal or wholegrain varieties. These foods also help prevent weight gain.



Participate in cancer screening

It is recommended that men aged 50–74 take part in the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program – see page 10.

Get to know your body and what is normal for you.
See your GP if you notice any changes.

Skin cancer

Australia has one of the highest rates of skin cancer in the world. It is the most commonly diagnosed cancer in Australia – over 440,000 people are treated for skin cancer each year.

The three main types of skin cancer are melanoma, basal cell carcinoma (BCC) and squamous cell carcinoma (SCC). Melanoma is the most dangerous form of the disease and it is more common in men than women. About 9500 men in Australia are expected to be diagnosed with melanoma in 2020.

Men are much more likely than women to be diagnosed with melanoma. This is because they are more likely to be outdoors and stay outdoors for longer, and less likely to use sun protection.

Reducing your risk

Exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun causes at least 95% of all skin cancers in Australia. Protecting yourself from the sun when you are outdoors is the simplest and best way of preventing melanoma and other skin cancers from occurring.

To help manage your exposure to UV, use the SunSmart app to check UV levels in your area. When UV levels are 3 or above – that is, high enough to cause permanent skin damage – use several of the sun protection measures listed on page 4. It's never too late to reduce your risk of skin cancer and these measures are effective whatever your age.

Your head is very vulnerable to sun damage – get in the habit of putting sunscreen on your face, neck and ears each morning after brushing your teeth.

Unlike other cancers, skin cancers are often visible to the naked eye, so you can check your own skin for signs of cancer (see opposite page).

WHAT SHOULD I LOOK OUT FOR?



Signs to look out for include:

- a new spot or lump on the skin
- a spot that looks and feels different from other spots on your skin
- a sore that doesn't heal within a few weeks
- a spot that has changed size, shape, colour or texture, or becomes itchy or bleeds.

See your GP or dermatologist if you find any changes to your skin.

Finding skin cancer early

Most skin cancers can be treated successfully if found early. There is no screening program for skin cancer, so getting to know your own skin will help you notice any new or changing spots, moles or freckles.

Check your skin for changes regularly. In a room with good light, undress and use a full-length mirror to look closely at your:

- head, scalp, neck and ears
- torso on the front, sides and back
- arms, hands, fingers and fingernails
- legs, toes, toenails and soles of the feet.

To check areas that are difficult to see, use a handheld mirror or ask someone to help you.

“The doctor said that we’d spotted the melanoma early ... I had some local anaesthetic, he cut it out and then it was closed up with stitches. I was relieved when the doctor called to say it was fine and no further treatment was needed.” PETE

Prostate cancer

Prostate cancer is one of the most common cancers diagnosed in Australian men – about 16,700 are expected to be diagnosed in 2020. The risk of a man being diagnosed with prostate cancer before the age of 85 is about 1 in 7.

Risk factors

The exact cause of prostate cancer is unknown, but certain things can increase the chance of developing it. The risk increases with age – prostate cancer mainly affects men aged 60 and above. Men who have a father or brother with prostate cancer, particularly if they were diagnosed before age 60, are more likely to develop the disease. The risk is even higher for men with more than one close relative who has had prostate cancer.

Reducing your risk

There is no way to guarantee that you won't get prostate cancer, but making healthy lifestyle choices may help reduce the risk (see tips on pages 4–5).

If you have a family history of prostate cancer, talk to your GP about whether you and others in your family need PSA testing (see opposite page).



WHAT SHOULD I LOOK OUT FOR?



Early prostate cancer rarely causes symptoms. Symptoms of later-stage cancer may include:

- unexplained weight loss
- frequent or sudden need to urinate
- blood in the urine or semen
- pain in the lower back or pelvis.

These symptoms don't mean you have prostate cancer. It is normal for the prostate to grow larger as you age and this may also affect how you urinate. If you have symptoms, see your GP.

Finding prostate cancer early

There is no national screening program for prostate cancer.

The prostate specific antigen (PSA) test measures the level of a protein called prostate specific antigen in the blood. PSA testing may identify fast-growing cancers that can spread to other parts of the body and would benefit from treatment. It may also find slow-growing cancers that are unlikely to be harmful.

A high PSA level doesn't mean you have cancer. Two-thirds of men with high PSA levels don't have prostate cancer and some men with prostate cancer have normal levels.

There is concern that PSA testing of healthy men will cause unnecessary harm and lead to treatments that may not offer long-term benefits. Treatment for prostate cancer can leave men with permanent side effects that can affect their quality of life.

Before having a PSA test, it is important to talk to your GP about the risks and benefits. For more information, visit psatesting.org.au.

Bowel cancer

About 8300 men in Australia are expected to be diagnosed with bowel (colorectal) cancer in 2020. The risk of a man being diagnosed with bowel cancer before the age of 85 is about 1 in 13.

Risk factors

Bowel cancer usually develops from small growths on the bowel wall called polyps. Most polyps are harmless but some become cancerous over time.

The risk of developing bowel cancer increases with age – bowel cancer is most common in people aged 50 or older, but it can affect men of any age. Men who have a parent or sibling with bowel cancer, particularly if they were diagnosed before age 55, are more likely to develop the disease. Other risk factors include a history of bowel polyps or inflammatory bowel disease. A small number of bowel cancers are caused by genetic conditions.

Bowel cancer screening

Being screened for bowel cancer when you don't have any symptoms can help find early changes in the bowel. Bowel cancer testing kits, known as immunochemical faecal occult blood tests or iFOBTs, can find microscopic traces of blood in a bowel motion that may indicate there is a problem.

Through the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program, eligible Australians aged 50–74 are automatically sent a free iFOBT kit to complete at home. If blood is found in your bowel motion (a positive result), you will be referred to your GP for further tests. A positive result doesn't necessarily mean you have bowel cancer.

For more information or to check your eligibility, call **1800 627 701** or visit cancerscreening.gov.au.

WHAT SHOULD I LOOK OUT FOR?



Symptoms of bowel cancer include:

- blood in a bowel motion (poo), in the toilet bowl or on toilet paper
- changed bowel habits, such as constipation, diarrhoea or more frequent bowel motions
- a feeling that the bowel hasn't completely emptied after a bowel motion
- a feeling of fullness or bloating in the bowel
- pain in the rectum or anus.

These symptoms are common and do not necessarily mean you have bowel cancer, but you should see your GP if you have any symptoms.

Reducing your risk

Making healthy lifestyle choices may help reduce the risk of developing bowel cancer. These include being physically active, maintaining a healthy weight, cutting out processed meat, cutting down on red meat, drinking less alcohol, not smoking, and eating wholegrains and foods containing dietary fibre. If you're aged 50–74, take part in the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program.

If you have a strong family history of bowel cancer or a genetic condition that can cause bowel cancer, ask your GP whether you need to have more regular tests and start screening at an earlier age.

Finding bowel cancer early

Bowel cancer can be treated successfully if it is found early. However, most early-stage bowel cancers do not have symptoms and fewer than 50% of bowel cancers are found in their early stages. Screening can help find bowel cancer earlier. Don't let embarrassment stop you from getting checked.

Lung cancer

About 7200 men in Australia are expected to be diagnosed with lung cancer in 2020. More men than women develop lung cancer. The risk of a man being diagnosed with lung cancer before the age of 85 is about 1 in 15.

Reducing your risk

Tobacco smoking causes about 90% of lung cancers in men, although some men who develop lung cancer have never smoked. Exposure to other people's smoke (passive smoking) also increases the risk. Smoking low-tar and low-nicotine cigarettes does not reduce the risk of developing lung cancer.

Quitting smoking is the best way to reduce your risk of developing lung cancer. If you smoke and would like to quit, speak to your GP, call the Quitline on **13 7848** or visit **icanquit.com.au**.

Other risk factors include being over 60, having a family history of lung cancer, having a personal history of lung disease, or exposure to asbestos or silica (often in the workplace). If you are exposed to cancer-causing dusts in the workplace, use personal protective equipment to protect your lungs.



WHAT SHOULD I LOOK OUT FOR?



The main symptoms of lung cancer are:

- a persistent new cough (lasting longer than three weeks)
- a change in an ongoing cough
- breathlessness
- pain in the chest and/or shoulder
- coughing or spitting up blood
- fatigue (feeling tired)
- weight loss or loss of appetite.

Having any of these symptoms doesn't mean you have lung cancer. Whether you smoke or not, it is important to see your GP if you have any symptoms.

Finding lung cancer early

Lung cancer can be difficult to diagnose at an early stage. Sometimes there are no symptoms and the cancer is detected during a routine test, such as an x-ray or CT scan, for an unrelated condition.

If you smoke or have been exposed to asbestos or silica in the workplace, talk to your GP about your risk of lung cancer.

Although a national lung cancer screening program is not yet available in Australia, trials are looking at the best way of screening people at high risk of lung cancer – see your GP to find out if there are any trials that would be suitable for you.

For information on how to protect yourself from cancer-causing substances in the workplace, including asbestos, silica dust and UV radiation, visit cancer.org.au/preventing-cancer/workplace-cancer.

Testicular cancer

Testicular cancer is not common, but it is one of the most commonly diagnosed cancers in men aged 18–39. About 930 men in Australia are expected to be diagnosed with testicular cancer in 2020.

Risk factors

The exact cause of testicular cancer is unknown. Any man can develop it, but it is more common in men who were born with an undescended or partially descended testicle. The risk is higher if your father or brother had testicular cancer, if you have previously had testicular cancer or if you are infertile. Being hit in the testicles or wearing tight underwear doesn't cause testicular cancer.

Finding testicular cancer early

Most cases of testicular cancer are found by accident by men themselves. From puberty onwards, get into the habit of feeling and looking at your testicles so you know what is normal for you.

It's easiest to check your testicles when they're warm and relaxed – after a shower or bath is ideal. If you notice anything different, including any of the signs below, see your GP for a check-up. In most cases, treatment for testicular cancer will be successful.

WHAT SHOULD I LOOK OUT FOR?



Look for any of the following warning signs:

- a hard lump or swelling in the testicle
- a change in the size or shape of the testicle
- pain or discomfort in the testicle, scrotum or lower abdomen
- unevenness between the testicles that is new
- a heavy or dragging feeling in the scrotum.

Head and neck cancer

About 3700 men in Australia are expected to be diagnosed with cancers in the mouth, nose and throat in 2020. Men are about three times more likely than women to develop these cancers.

Risk factors

The main causes of head and neck cancers are smoking and drinking alcohol. Men who smoke and have three or more drinks a day for several years have the highest risk. These cancers are more common in men over 40. Other risk factors include infection with human papillomavirus (HPV), being overweight or obese, and breathing in cancer-causing substances (e.g. wood dust or certain types of paint or chemicals).

Reducing your risk

Avoiding smoking, limiting alcohol and maintaining a healthy body weight are the best ways to reduce your risk of developing a head and neck cancer. Getting vaccinated against HPV can reduce the risk of some cancers of the mouth and throat.

If you smoke and would like to quit, speak to your GP, call the Quitline on **13 7848** or visit **icanquit.com.au**. Early detection of head and neck cancers can lead to successful treatment.

WHAT SHOULD I LOOK OUT FOR?



Signs to look out for include:

- pain or swelling
- a hoarse voice
- persistent ulcers or bleeding from the mouth
- difficulty swallowing and bad breath.

See your GP or dentist for a check-up if you have any symptoms.

Find trustworthy information & support

Cancer Council produces free booklets, fact sheets, online information and podcasts about more than 25 types of cancer, as well as treatments, emotional and practical issues, and recovery.

If you or someone you know has been diagnosed with cancer, call **13 11 20** for information and support, or visit **cancercouncil.com.au**.



Note to reader

Always consult your doctor about matters that affect your health. This information brochure provides general information only and should not be seen as a substitute for medical advice. You should obtain independent advice relevant to your specific situation from appropriate professionals, and you may wish to discuss issues raised in this information brochure with them.

All care is taken to ensure that this information brochure is accurate at the time of publication. Please note that information on cancer, including the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of cancer, is constantly being updated and revised by medical professionals and the research community. Cancer Council NSW excludes all liability for any injury, loss or damage incurred by use of or reliance on the information provided in this publication.

Cancer Council NSW

153 Dowling Street, Woolloomooloo NSW 2011

ABN 51 116 463 846

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First published 2007. This edition November 2020.

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