

Men and Cancer

Your guide
to reducing your
risk of cancer



About 70,000 Australian men are diagnosed with cancer each year.

The most common cancers in men are skin, prostate, bowel and lung cancers.

The good news is that there are steps you can take to reduce your risk of getting cancer, or to help find cancer early when there is a greater likelihood of remission or cure.

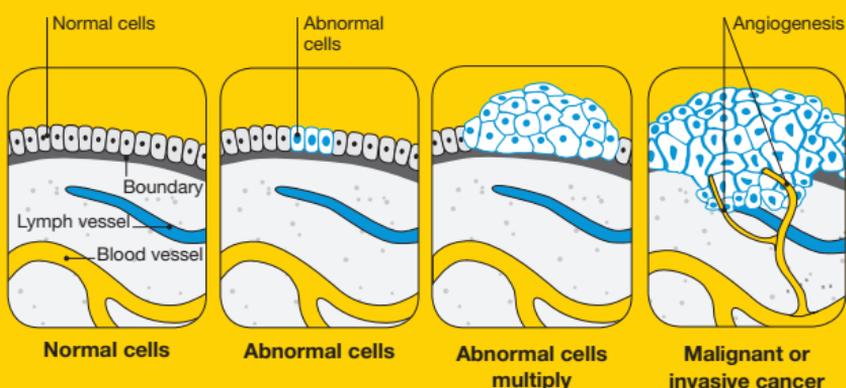
This brochure provides information about the cancers common in men, healthy lifestyle tips to lower your risk of cancer, and advice about what you can do at various stages of your life to help find cancer early.

What is cancer?

Cancer is a disease of the cells, which are the body's basic building blocks. 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.

Sometimes cells don't grow, divide and die in the usual way. This may cause blood or lymph fluid in the body to become abnormal or form a lump called a tumour. A tumour can be benign (not cancer) or malignant (cancer).

How cancer starts



Reducing your cancer risk

There is no way to guarantee you won't get cancer, but about one-third of cancers can be prevented by making healthy lifestyle choices. Cancer Council recommends you:

Quit smoking or, better still, never start; and avoid second-hand smoke.



Maintain a healthy weight.

Protect yourself from the sun in 5 ways: slip on clothing that covers your shoulders, arms and legs; slop on sunscreen; slap on a hat; seek shade; and slide on sunglasses.



Be physically active. Aim for 60 minutes of moderate exercise or 30 minutes of vigorous exercise most days or every day.



Limit your alcohol intake. The recommended intake is an average of no more than 2 standard drinks a day.

Eat moderate amounts of lean red meat, and limit or avoid processed meats.



Enjoy plenty of fruit and vegetables. Aim for 2 serves of fruit and 5 serves of vegetables or legumes a day.

Eat a variety of wholegrain, wholemeal and other high-fibre foods, such as cereals, breads, rice and pasta. Aim for at least 4–6 serves a day.



Choose a diet low in salt and fat.

A small amount of fat is essential for good health and can be found in foods such as avocado, nuts, seeds and oily fish.

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

Have recommended screening tests.

What is cancer screening?

Screening is testing for cancer or precancerous changes in people who don't have symptoms. There is a national screening program for bowel cancer in men aged 50 and older – see page 12.



Prostate cancer

Prostate cancer is the most common cancer diagnosed in Australian men after skin cancer. About 17,000 men are diagnosed with prostate cancer each year.

The prostate gland is found only in men. It is a small gland between the penis and the bladder that wraps around the urethra, which is the tube that carries urine from the bladder to the penis. The main function of the prostate gland is to help produce sperm.

The exact cause of prostate cancer is unknown, but certain factors can increase the chances of developing it. The risk increases with age – prostate cancer mainly affects men aged 60 or older. Men who have a close relative (father or brother) with prostate cancer, particularly if they were diagnosed before age 65, are more likely to develop the disease than men with no family history. The risk is even higher for men with more than one close relative who has had prostate cancer.

Early prostate cancer doesn't usually cause symptoms. Symptoms of later-stage prostate cancer include:

- feeling an urgent need to urinate
- difficulty starting to urinate
- a slow or intermittent stream of urine
- leaking or dribbling after urination
- blood in the urine
- pain when urinating
- pain in the lower back or pelvis.

These symptoms don't necessarily mean you have prostate cancer. In many cases, they are caused by a non-cancerous growth called benign prostate enlargement or benign prostate hyperplasia. This is common in men over 50.

If you are experiencing symptoms and they are a concern for you, see your doctor.

Finding prostate cancer early

There is no national screening program for the early detection of prostate cancer. Doctors have different opinions about whether all men without symptoms of prostate cancer should be tested.

There is concern that testing 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 side effects such as erectile dysfunction and continence issues, which can affect their quality of life.

Testing may identify fast-growing or aggressive cancers that have the potential to spread to other parts of the body and would benefit from treatment. It may also detect very slow-growing cancers that are unlikely to be harmful.

Weigh up all the risks and benefits before deciding whether to be tested for prostate cancer, particularly if you don't have symptoms. Talking to your doctor can help.

Prostate cancer tests

If you decide to be tested for prostate cancer, or if you have symptoms, your doctor will order a prostate specific antigen (PSA) test. This test measures the level of a protein called prostate specific antigen in the blood and will show whether there might be a problem with the prostate gland. A high PSA level doesn't necessarily mean you have prostate cancer. Two-thirds of men with elevated PSA levels don't have prostate cancer, and some men with a normal PSA will have prostate cancer.

If your doctor suspects you have prostate cancer, they will usually refer you to a urologist for further tests, including a digital rectal examination (DRE). This is when the doctor inserts a gloved finger into the rectum to check the prostate gland for abnormalities. To confirm a diagnosis of prostate cancer, the doctor will recommend a biopsy.



Lung cancer

About 7000 men are diagnosed with lung cancer in Australia each year.

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 of lung cancer.

Other risk factors for lung cancer include:

- being over 60
- having a family history of lung cancer
- having a personal history of lung disease, such as chronic bronchitis, emphysema or lung fibrosis
- exposure to substances or particles such as asbestos, coal gas, diesel fumes and radiation.

Talk to your doctor if you are concerned about your lung cancer risk.

Smoking low-tar and low-nicotine cigarettes will not reduce your risk of developing lung cancer.

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 routine tests, such as an x-ray or CT scan.

Whether you smoke or not, see your doctor if you have any of the following symptoms:

- a persistent cough (lasting longer than 3 weeks)
- a change in a cough
- coughing up blood.

Having any of these symptoms doesn't necessarily mean you have lung cancer.

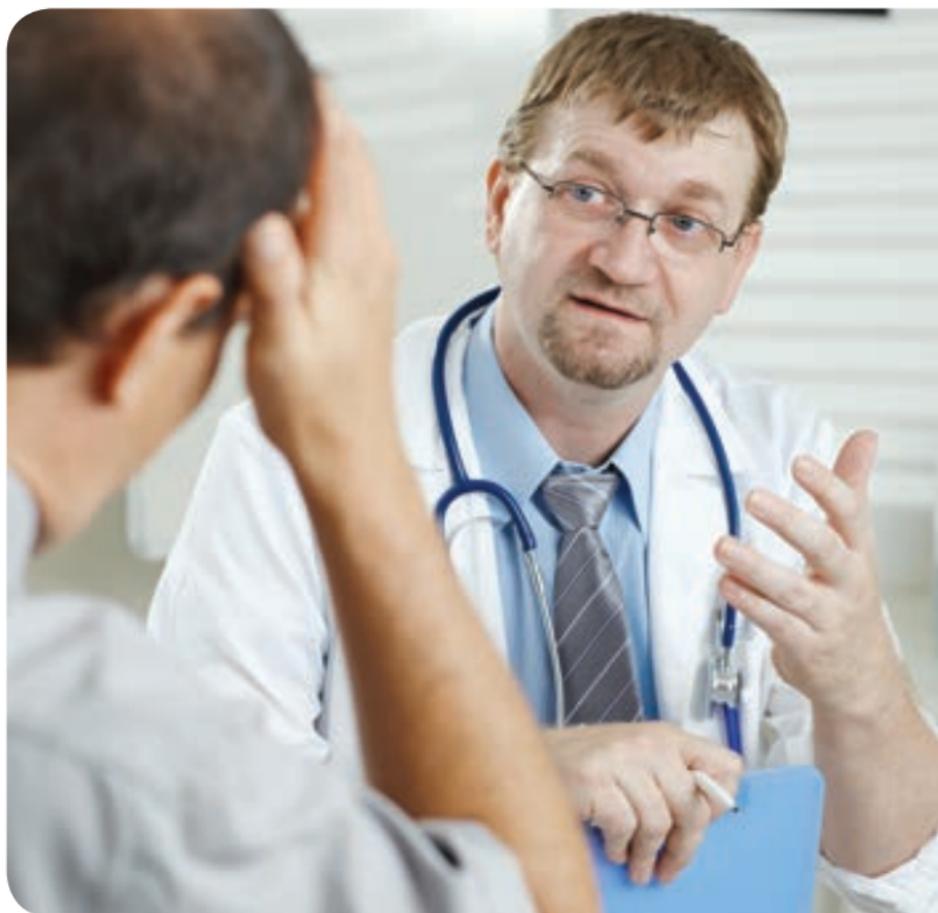
Smoking and men

Smoking increases the chances of developing many types of cancer, including bladder, bowel, kidney, stomach, liver and pancreatic cancers, and cancers of the head and neck.

Smoking can affect sperm production and cause erectile dysfunction. It also increases the risk of developing heart disease and other lung conditions.

Quitting smoking at any age will benefit your health. After 12 hours, almost all of the nicotine will be out of your system. Within days, your tastebuds and sense of smell will start to return. Within weeks, you'll find it easier to exercise. Within 5–9 years, your risk of lung cancer will be reduced.

Quitting can be difficult, so speak to your doctor, call the Quitline on **13 7848**, or visit **icanquit.com.au**.





Skin cancer

Skin cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer in Australia, which has one of the highest rates of skin cancer in the world. The three main types of skin cancer are basal cell carcinoma, squamous cell carcinoma and melanoma, which is the most dangerous form of the disease and is more commonly diagnosed in older men than in women.

Ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun causes most skin cancers, so protecting yourself in the sun is the simplest and best way to lower your risk. When UV levels are 3 or above – that is, high enough to cause permanent skin damage – practise the following sun protection measures:

- **Slip** on clothing that covers your shoulders, arms and legs. Choose shirts with collars, high necks and sleeves; and trousers or long shorts.
- **Slop** on SPF30+ or SPF50+ broad-spectrum water-resistant sunscreen. Apply 20 minutes before going outside and reapply every 2 hours.
- **Slap** on a broad-brimmed, bucket or legionnaire-style hat that protects your face, ears and neck.
- **Seek** shade whenever you can.
- **Slide** on sunglasses that meet Australian/New Zealand Standard AS/NZS 1067:2003 and fit your face well.



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:

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

See your doctor if you have:

- a new spot or lump
- an unusual freckle, mole or sunspot
- a sore that doesn't heal
- a spot that looks different from other spots around it
- a spot that has changed colour, size or shape, has an irregular border, or becomes itchy or bleeds.

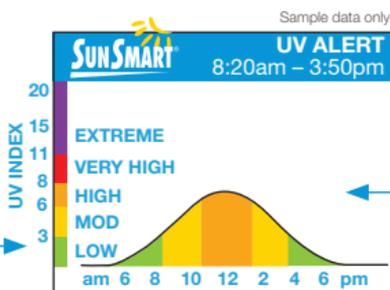
The SunSmart UV Alert

This useful tool tells you when the UV Index will be 3 or above and sun protection measures are required. You can check the SunSmart UV Alert daily at cancercouncil.com.au/sunsmartuvalert, in many newspapers or using the free SunSmart app.

How to read the Alert

UV Index ranges

- Low (0–2)
- Moderate (3–5)
- High (6–7)
- Very High (8–10)
- Extreme (11+)



This shows when you need to be SunSmart on this day.

The maximum UV Index level on this day is forecast to be 7, which is high.



Bowel cancer

About 9500 men are diagnosed with bowel cancer in Australia each year.

The risk of developing bowel cancer increases with age. It is most common in men over 50, although younger men can also get bowel cancer. Other risk factors include a history of bowel polyps, and having ulcerative colitis or Crohn's disease, particularly if you have had it for more than eight years.

A family history of bowel cancer can also increase your risk. Talk to your doctor if a close relative (e.g. a parent or sibling) has had bowel cancer, especially if they were younger than 55 when they were diagnosed.

A small number of bowel cancers are caused by genetic conditions. Your doctor can answer any questions you have about your bowel cancer risk.

Finding bowel cancer early

Bowel cancer can be treated successfully if it is detected early. However, most early-stage bowel cancers do not have symptoms, and fewer than 40% of bowel cancers are detected in their early stages. Don't let embarrassment stop you from getting checked.

Symptoms of bowel cancer include:

- blood in a bowel motion, in the toilet bowl or on toilet paper. If you are over 50, check after each bowel motion
- changes in bowel habits, such as constipation, diarrhoea, or smaller, more frequent bowel movements
- a feeling that the bowel hasn't completely emptied after a bowel movement
- a feeling of fullness or bloating in the bowel or rectum
- rectal or anal pain.

Not everyone with these symptoms has bowel cancer. If you have symptoms, see your doctor, who may refer you for tests.

Reducing your risk of bowel cancer



There is no way to guarantee that you won't get bowel cancer, but the following measures can help reduce the risk:

- **Be physically active** – This is one of the most important ways you can reduce your risk of bowel cancer. Evidence shows that being sedentary (sitting or lying down) for long periods can increase the risk of bowel cancer.
- **Maintain a healthy weight** – Being overweight or obese can increase your risk of bowel cancer.
- **Eat plenty of vegetables, fruit and legumes** – Vegetables, fruit and legumes contain dietary fibre, vitamins and minerals that can help protect against cancer. Aim for 2 serves of fruit and 5 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 at least 4–6 serves each day.
- **Eat a moderate amount of lean red meat, and limit or avoid processed meats** – A diet high in red meat, particularly processed meats (such as sausages, salami, bacon and ham), increases the risk of bowel cancer.
- **Limit your alcohol intake** – There is strong evidence that alcohol can increase the risk of bowel cancer. The recommended intake is an average of no more than 2 standard drinks a day.
- **Don't smoke** – Smoking can cause bowel cancer. If you do smoke and would like to quit, talk to your doctor, call the Quitline on **13 7848**, or visit **icanquit.com.au**.
- **Take part in the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program** – Being screened for bowel cancer when you don't have any symptoms can help find early changes in the bowel. See the next page for details.

Bowel cancer screening

Bowel cancer testing kits, known as faecal occult blood tests or FOBTs, can find microscopic blood in a bowel motion that may indicate there is a problem.

The FOBT is currently the most widely available and effective screening test for bowel cancer, although no screening test is 100% accurate.

Many pharmacists sell testing kits, or your doctor can arrange for a kit to be sent to you. Many people receive a free kit as part of the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program.

If you're 50 or older with no symptoms or history of bowel cancer, you should have an FOBT every two years.

If you have a strong family history of bowel cancer, a genetic condition that can cause bowel cancer or symptoms of bowel cancer, ask your doctor whether you need to have regular tests.

National Bowel Cancer Screening Program

Many people aged 50 and older who hold a Medicare or Department of Veterans' Affairs card are automatically sent a free FOBT kit as part of the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program. The test can be completed in your home and involves using the kit to take samples from two separate bowel motions (faeces) and then mailing them to a pathology laboratory for testing.

If blood is found in your bowel motion (a positive result), you will be referred to your doctor for further tests to check for bowel cancer. A positive result doesn't necessarily mean you have bowel cancer.

For more information about the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program, call **1800 118 868** or visit **cancerscreening.gov.au**.



Testicular cancer

Testicular cancer is not a common cancer, but it is the most commonly diagnosed cancer after skin cancer in men aged 18–39.

In most cases, treatment for testicular cancer will lead to remission or cure.

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 or testicles. The risk is higher if you have a relative who has had testicular cancer, or if you have a personal history of the disease. Being hit in the testicles and wearing tight underwear don't cause testicular cancer.

Finding testicular cancer early

Most cases of testicular cancer are found by accident by the men themselves. From puberty onwards, all men should examine their testicles to work out what feels normal for them.

There is no correct technique for checking your testicles. You should simply get into the habit of feeling and looking at them in a way that is comfortable for you. It's easiest to check your testicles when they're warm and relaxed – after a shower or bath is ideal.

Look for any of the following warning signs:

- a hard lump on the front or side of the testicle
- a change in the size or shape of the testicle
- pain or discomfort in the testicle, scrotum or lower abdomen
- an unusual difference between the testicles, e.g. in size
- a heavy or dragging feeling in the scrotum.

Having any of these symptoms doesn't mean you have testicular cancer. See your doctor if you are concerned.



Head and neck cancers

Head and neck cancers is a general term for cancers in the mouth, nose and throat. About 3300 men are diagnosed with head and neck cancers in Australia each year.

Head and neck cancers include cancer in the following organs and body parts:

- mouth, including the lips, gums and tongue
- throat
- voice box (larynx)
- nasal cavity and sinuses.

The main causes of head and neck cancers are drinking alcohol and smoking. A combination of the two further increases the risk. Men who smoke and have three or more drinks a day for several years have the highest risk.

Other risk factors for head and neck cancers include:

- HPV (human papillomavirus) and Epstein-Barr virus infection
- poor oral hygiene and gum disease
- a diet low in fruit, vegetables and vitamin A
- occupational exposure, e.g. breathing in asbestos fibres, wood dust or certain types of paint or chemicals.

Avoiding smoking and limiting alcohol are the best ways to reduce your risk of head and neck cancers. If you smoke and would like to quit, speak to your doctor, call the Quitline on **13 7848**, or visit **icanquit.com.au**.

Finding head and neck cancers early

Early detection of head and neck cancers can lead to successful treatment. Symptoms include pain, swelling, a hoarse voice, difficulty swallowing and bad breath.

Having any of these symptoms doesn't mean you have cancer. See your doctor if you are concerned.



Where to get help and information

- **Cancer Council 13 11 20 for Information and Support**

For confidential information and emotional support

- **Cancer Council website**

cancercouncil.com.au

Note to reader

Always consult your doctor about matters that affect your health. This 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 brochure with them.

All care is taken to ensure that the information in this brochure is accurate at the time of publication. Information on preventing cancer is constantly being updated 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 brochure.



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