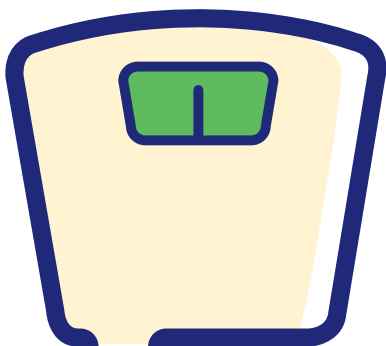


Be a healthy weight

Reduce your cancer risk



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

Reducing your cancer risk

A healthy lifestyle can prevent one third of cancers. To reduce your risk of cancer, Cancer Council NSW recommends these lifestyle choices:

- **Be a healthy body weight**
- Limit red meat and avoid processed meat
- Eat at least 5 serves of vegetables and 2 serves of fruit each day
- Eat a variety of wholegrain, wholemeal and high-fibre foods, such as bread, pasta, oats, rice, legumes (beans, peas and lentils) and nuts
- Move more, sit less and be active for at least 30 minutes each day
- Avoid high-kilojoule foods and sugary drinks to prevent weight gain
- Choose foods low in salt
- Limit drinking alcohol
- Don't smoke and avoid other people's smoke
- Protect your skin from the sun
- If you can, breastfeed your baby for at least 6 months

Q: Does being a healthy weight reduce cancer risk?

Keeping your weight within the healthy range and avoiding weight gain as an adult is an important way to reduce your cancer risk.

Many people don't realise that being overweight or obese is a risk factor for many types of cancer, including bowel, kidney, stomach, gallbladder, ovary, prostate, pancreas, oesophagus, endometrium, liver, mouth, throat and breast (after menopause).

About 4000 cancers diagnosed each year in Australian adults can be attributed to being overweight or obese.

Q: How does being overweight increase cancer risk?

Researchers are still investigating how being overweight causes cancer. However, there are several possible reasons:

- Too much body fat can cause insulin and other growth factor levels to rise, and this can make cancer cells grow.
- Fat cells release sex hormones that are linked with some cancers.
- Body fat stimulates inflammation that promotes cancer development.

Q: Am I a healthy weight?

The health risk associated with your body weight can be estimated using your waist measurement and body mass index (BMI).

How to measure your waist

Having fat around your abdomen or waist, regardless of your body size, increases your risk of developing certain weight-related health conditions, including cancer.

1. Place a measuring tape firmly around your waist.

For women – measure around the narrowest point of your waist

For men – measure around your navel

2. Make sure you breathe normally.
3. Use the table below to determine your health risk.

HEALTH RISK	waist measurement (cm)	
	women	men
low risk	less than 80 cm	less than 94 cm
increased risk	80 cm or more	94 cm or more
greatly increased risk	88 cm or more	102 cm or more

Q: How do I calculate my BMI?

BMI is a simple way to find out if you are a healthy weight for your height.

Work out your BMI by dividing your weight in kilograms (kg) by your height in metres squared.

$$\text{BMI} = \text{weight (kg)} / \text{height (m)} \times \text{height (m)}$$

body mass index (BMI)	category
less than 18.5	underweight
between 18.5 and 25	healthy weight
between 25 and 30	overweight
more than 30	obese

If you are above a healthy weight, focus on making realistic and long-term changes to your current eating and activity patterns. Avoid fad diets and extreme exercise plans. Being active and following a healthy eating and drinking plan most of the time is a good start. If you need more help, see your general practitioner (GP) or find a dietitian.

Q: How do I maintain a healthy weight?

The amount of energy in food or drink is measured in kilojoules (kJ).

Kilojoules are the metric version of calories – you can convert calories into kilojoules by multiplying calories by 4.2.

If you eat and drink more kilojoules than your body uses through metabolism, exercise and day-to-day activities, the spare energy is stored as fat and you put on weight.

Factors that can lead to weight gain include:

- having too many unhealthy foods and drinks high in kilojoules, added fat or sugars, e.g. sugary drinks, takeaway foods, potato chips, pies, cakes and sweets
- having large food portions or eating more often than your body needs
- not doing enough moderate or vigorous physical activity
- being too sedentary, e.g. watching television or using computers for long periods of time

To achieve and maintain a healthy body weight, eat a balanced diet and do regular physical activity.

WAYS TO EAT A HEALTHY DIET



- Eat a variety of nutritious foods every day. Include fruit, vegetables, legumes, wholegrains and high-fibre foods.
- Use reduced-fat milk, yoghurt and cheese, which are also low in added sugars and salt.
- Choose lean cuts of meat and trim as much fat as possible before cooking.
- Limit your intake of red meat and avoid processed meats like ham and bacon.
- Adapt your recipes to include more vegetables and legumes.
- Fill at least half of your dinner plate with different coloured vegetables.
- Avoid snacks that are high in added fats, sugar and salt, such as chips, biscuits and chocolate. Replace them with fruit, vegetables, unsalted nuts or yoghurt.
- Limit takeaway foods that are high in fat, sugar and salt.
- Swap sugary drinks such as soft drinks, iced tea and fruit drinks for water.
- Limit alcohol, it adds kilojoules and increases cancer risk.
- When selecting packaged foods, use the Health Star Rating system to compare similar products. Choose products with the most stars. For more information, see healthstarrating.gov.au.

Q: How active should I be?

Being physically active and limiting sedentary behaviour such as sitting or lying down is essential for health and maintaining a healthy weight. Aim for at least 150 minutes (2½ hours) of moderate physical activity or 75 minutes (1¼ hours) of vigorous physical activity every week.

For maximum cancer prevention benefits, aim for 60 minutes of moderate activity or 30 minutes of vigorous activity every day.

- Plan activity into your daily routine – before work, at lunchtime and after work.
- Use active transport – walk, cycle or scoot part or all the way to work or activities.
- Take the stairs not the lift and walk up and down escalators.
- Be more active on the weekend, on days off or when catching up with friends – go for a bushwalk or play cricket in the park.
- Break up long periods of sitting or screen time by standing up every 30 minutes.

SEE THE OTHER BROCHURES IN THIS SERIES

- Eat fruit, vegetables, wholegrains and fibre
- Drink less alcohol
- Be physically active
- Eat less red and processed meat

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