



Be physically active

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:

- **Move more, sit less and be active for at least 30 minutes each day**
- 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
- Be a healthy body weight
- 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: What is physical activity?

- **Physical activity** is any activity that gets your body moving and speeds up your breathing and heartbeat. It can be running, swimming, team sport, exercise classes or housework.
- **Sedentary behaviour** is sitting or lying down and uses little energy. It can include sitting to watch television or read a book.

Q: Does physical activity reduce cancer risk?

There is strong evidence that physical activity can reduce your risk of cancer of the bowel, breast (after menopause) and endometrium. Vigorous physical activity may protect against breast cancer in premenopausal women.

Physical activity also helps to prevent weight gain. Overweight and obesity are risk factors for many cancers including bowel, breast (after menopause), endometrium, kidney, pancreas, liver and oesophagus. Even if you are a healthy weight, physical activity reduces cancer risk.

About 1800 cases of cancer diagnosed each year in Australian adults can be attributed to a lack of physical activity.

Q: How does being physically active reduce cancer risk?

Researchers are still investigating how physical activity reduces cancer risk. However, there are several possible reasons:

- For bowel cancer, physical activity helps move waste through the bowel faster, limiting the time harmful compounds stay in contact with the bowel lining.
- When you are active, your body produces less insulin and insulin-like growth factor, which promote the growth of cancer cells.
- Physical activity may help reduce different hormone levels that are linked to cancer.

Q: How active should I be?

Australia's Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines encourage adults to be active every day in as many ways as possible.

- Do at least 150 minutes (2½ hours) of moderate activity or 75 minutes (1¼ hours) of vigorous activity every week, or a combination of moderate and vigorous activities.
- Aim to increase this to 300 minutes (5 hours) of moderate activity or 150 minutes (2½ hours) of vigorous activity every week.
- For maximum cancer prevention benefits, aim for 60 minutes of moderate physical activity or 30 minutes of vigorous activity every day.

MEASURING EXERCISE INTENSITY



How hard your body is working during physical activity is known as exercise intensity and is often described as low, moderate or vigorous.



Moderate intensity

activities increase your breathing and heart rate.

Examples include:

- brisk walking
- swimming
- golf
- household chores.



Vigorous intensity

activities make you huff and puff.

Examples include:

- running
- aerobics
- organised sports such as football or netball.

If you have a medical condition or are unsure about your health, ask your doctor for advice before starting any new physical activity.

If you are currently inactive, any increase in activity is beneficial. Reduce the amount of time you spend sitting.

Q: What are the other benefits of physical activity?

Physical activity has many health benefits aside from protecting against cancer. It can:

- help you feel and sleep better
- boost energy levels
- reduce the risk of heart disease and type 2 diabetes
- relieve stress
- help prevent weight gain and assist with weight loss
- increase muscle strength
- improve mobility and balance
- benefit the environment – more active transport means less cars and less pollution.

Q: How can I get active?

Make time for a walk

- Walk with a friend, work colleague or join a walking group.
- Turn off the television or computer and go for a walk instead.

Plan activity into your daily routine

- Take up a sport, e.g. netball, soccer, swimming, tennis.
- Join an exercise group or a local gym and do strength training, tai chi, Pilates, boxing, dance, yoga or Zumba.
- Have some active fun, e.g. cycling, bushwalking, surfing, team sports, dancing.
- Be more active on the weekend, on days off or when catching up with friends. e.g. go for a bushwalk or play cricket in the park.
- While watching television, do some simple exercises such as sit-ups or lunges.

Use active transport

- Walk, cycle or scoot part or all the way to work, activities or taking children to school.
- Catch public transport and walk to the bus or train stop.
- Get off the bus or train one stop earlier or park further away from your destination and walk the rest of the way.



Use free activity apps on your smartphone to measure your activity and help motivate and remind you to exercise.

Increase incidental activity

- Take the stairs instead of the lift.
- Walk up and down escalators.
- Talk to your colleagues instead of sending an email.
- Stand up to change the TV channel.
- Do vigorous housework and activities around the home such as vacuuming, gardening or mowing the lawn.

Being active requires some thought and effort each day and it needs to be kept up so choose activities you enjoy. Start realistically and gradually build-up the amount of activity you do. Exercise with a friend to stay motivated.

Remember to slip on clothing, slop on sunscreen, slap on a hat, seek shade and slide on your sunglasses to protect yourself while in the sun.

SEE THE OTHER BROCHURES IN THIS SERIES

- Eat fruit, vegetables, wholegrains and fibre
- Drink less alcohol
- Eat less red and processed meat
- Be a healthy weight

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