



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
Welsh Assembly Government

# Cancer

reduce the risk



More than one in three people in Wales will develop cancer during their lifetime. Most cases are in people over 60, but the habits we adopt earlier in life can alter our risk. Half of all cancers could be prevented by changes to lifestyle.

**Stop smoking** – Smoking is the single biggest cause of cancer in the world. If you smoke, giving up is the most important thing you can do for your health.

Smoking causes nearly all cases of lung cancer. It also causes cancer of the mouth, nose, voice box, food pipe, stomach, kidney, bladder, pancreas, liver and cervix.

The earlier you stop smoking the better, but it is never too late to quit. The longer you stay off tobacco, the more you lower your



risk of lung cancer and other diseases. Be persistent...quitting for good can take three or more attempts.

Ask your doctor for advice or freephone Stop Smoking Wales on 0800 085 2219.

**Stay in shape** – Being overweight or obese increases your risk of developing cancer of the bowel, kidney, food pipe, gallbladder, pancreas and womb. It also increases the risk of breast cancer in women who have been through the menopause.

Try to maintain a healthy body weight by balancing the energy you take in from food and the energy you burn through physical activity.



### **Take some regular exercise –**

Physical activity has been shown to reduce the risk of bowel cancer and breast cancer. Try to take at least half an hour of moderate activity on five or more days each week.

Moderate activity should make you slightly out of breath. This could be brisk walking, gardening, swimming, cycling, dancing or jogging.

If you can't manage 30 minutes in one go, break it down into 10 or 15 minute sessions.

**Eat and drink healthily –** Our diet affects our risk of developing certain cancers, including cancer of the bowel, stomach, mouth, and food pipe. To help reduce the risk:



- Boost the amount of fibre in your diet by choosing wholegrain bread, cereals, rice and pasta.
- Eat at least five different portions of fruit and vegetables every day.
- Eat smaller and fewer portions of red and processed meat.
- Try to eat more fish, especially poached or baked fish.
- Remember that supplements are no substitute for a healthy balanced diet.

**Limit your alcohol intake** – Drinking alcohol increases the risk of developing cancer of the mouth, upper throat, voice box, food pipe, liver, bowel and breast. The more alcohol you drink, the greater your risk.



For anyone who drinks regularly, the more you cut down on alcohol the more you reduce your risk. There is limited risk if you only drink a little, such as one small drink a day for women and two small drinks a day for men.

**Be SunSmart** – Too much sun ages your skin and can cause skin cancer.

People with fair skin, lots of moles, or a family history of skin cancer are at greatest risk. Take extra care with children's skin, as it is more easily damaged.

Being SunSmart and taking care not to burn could prevent most cases of skin cancer. Use factor 15+ sunscreen on exposed skin and find shade or cover up with a hat, t-shirt and sunglasses between 11am and 3pm.



**Go for cancer screening** – Tests called ‘screening’ can pick up unusual changes early so that treatment is more effective.

- Breast screening (mammography) can detect very small breast cancers that can be treated effectively. All women between the age of 50 and 70 who are registered with a GP are invited automatically every three years. Women over the age of 70 are screened on request at intervals of no less than three years.
- Cervical screening (the smear test) can pick up abnormal cervical changes before cancer develops. In Wales, women aged 20 to 64 who are registered with a GP are invited for cervical screening every three years.



**Practise safer sex** – Some sexually transmitted infections can cause cancer. The hepatitis B virus is a common cause of cancer that starts in the liver and can be spread through unprotected sex.

Nearly all cases of cervical cancer are caused by Human Papilloma Virus (HPV). HPV infection is very common, but most women who have had it will not develop cervical cancer.

**Further information** – For more information about healthy choices that could reduce your risk of cancer visit [www.cancerresearchuk.org/health](http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/health) or [www.wales.gov.uk/healthchallenge](http://www.wales.gov.uk/healthchallenge)

