



Look after number one

A cancer prevention plan for women

Keep an eye on yourself

Finding cancer early offers one of the best chances to cure the disease. See your doctor straight away if you notice any unusual changes.

Look for:

- Lumps, sores or ulcers that don't heal
- Unusual changes in your breasts – lumps, lumpiness, a thickened area, unusual nipple discharge, a nipple that turns inwards (if it hasn't always been that way), changes in shape, colour or unusual pain
- Coughs that don't go away or show blood, a hoarseness that hangs around
- A loss in weight that can't be explained
- Any loss of blood, even a few spots between periods or after they stop
- Moles that have changed shape, size or colour, or bleed
- Blood in a bowel motion
- Persistent changes in toilet habits
- Persistent abdominal pain or bloating

These symptoms can also be related to more common, less serious health problems.

Screening for breast and cervical cancer saves lives, so these regular checks are one of the best health habits to get into.

Check for early breast cancer

Contact your local BreastScreen service on 13 20 50 for a free screening mammogram once every two years if you are aged between 50 and 69. Women over the ages of 40 and 70 can request a mammogram. Screening mammograms can detect early breast cancer, which gives the best chance for effective treatment and long term survival. Be "Breast Aware" and know what is normal for you.

Have regular Pap tests for cervical cancer

Have a Pap smear every two years from the age of 18, or within two years of becoming sexually active, whichever is later. Pap smears can detect early changes in the cells of the cervix, allowing them to be effectively treated before cancer develops. Up to 90% of cervical cancers can be prevented through regular Pap smear screening.

There are currently no screening tests for other gynaecological cancers such as ovarian, uterine, endometrial, vulvar or vaginal cancers, but fortunately these cancers are very rare. Simply be aware of what is normal for you and if you notice any changes or symptoms that persist for two or more weeks, visit your doctor.

Ask about screening for bowel cancer

Early detection of bowel cancer significantly improves chances of successful treatment. Your risk of bowel cancer increases with age. About 15% of people have known risk factors which put them at increased risk. If you fall into this category your doctor will talk to you about regular screening. A National screening program using the faecal occult blood test (FOBT) for people aged 55 and 65 will commence in mid 2006. FOBT detects hidden blood in faeces.

Make lifestyle changes

At least 50% of cancers including cancer of the lung, skin, bowel, breast, cervix and liver could be prevented by making positive lifestyle changes.

Stop Smoking - lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer death in Australian women. If you are a smoker, make a real attempt to Quit. Call the Quitline on 13 7848 (13 QUIT) for free advice.

Be SunSmart – protect yourself in the sun and take care not to burn.

Stay in Shape – aim for a healthy body weight

Move Your Body – be physically active for at least 30 minutes most days (preferably all)

Eat for Health – choose a varied diet with plenty of fruit and vegetables.

Avoid Alcohol – try alcohol free days and non-alcoholic drinks

Ways to reduce your cancer risk

How do you stack up?

(Tick if you need to take action)

- ☐ Quit smoking
- ☐ Be SunSmart
- ☐ Keep to a healthy weight
- ☐ Be more physically active
- ☐ Eat a healthy, well balanced diet
- ☐ Avoid or limit alcohol intake