



A cancer prevention plan for women

Finding cancer early improves your chances of successful treatment and long-term survival

Look for:

- lumps, sores or ulcers that don't heal
- unusual changes in your breasts – lumps, thickening, unusual discharge, nipples that suddenly turn inwards, changes in shape, colour or unusual pain
- coughs that don't go away, show blood, or a hoarseness that hangs around
- weight loss that can't be explained
- bleeding between periods
- moles that have changed shape, size or colour, or an inflamed skin sore that hasn't healed
- blood in a bowel motion
- persistent changes in toilet habits, or
- persistent abdominal pain or bloating.

These symptoms are often related to more common, less serious health problems. However, if they persist, visit your doctor.

Check for early breast cancer

If you are over 40, have a free BreastScreen Australia mammogram (breast x-ray) every two years. Mammograms look for early breast cancers in women without symptoms and can reduce the risk of breast cancer death by 25 per cent, particularly in women aged 50-69.

Have a regular Pap smear

Have a Pap smear every two years from the age of 18, or within one to two years of becoming sexually active. Pap smears can detect early changes in the cells of the cervix, so they can be treated before cancer develops. Up to 90 per cent of cervical cancers can be prevented through regular Pap smears.

In Australia, women can access a vaccine that may protect against the cause of most cervical cancers, human papillomavirus (HPV). However, the vaccines do not protect against all HPV types that cause cervical cancers, so vaccinated women will still need regular Pap smears.

There are currently no screening tests for ovarian, uterine, endometrial, vulvar or vaginal cancers. Be aware of what is normal for you and if you notice any changes or symptoms that persist, visit your doctor.

Ask about screening for bowel cancer

Early detection of bowel cancer greatly improves chances of successful treatment. Your risk of bowel cancer increases with age. If you are 50 or over, you should be tested for bowel cancer every two years. The National Bowel Cancer Screening program uses the faecal occult blood test (FOBT) to detect hidden blood in bowel motions. People without symptoms aged 50, 55 and 65 are eligible to participate. From 1 July 2013, people turning 60 will be included; people turning 70 will be included in 2015. Some people have known risk factors which put them at increased risk. If you do, your doctor will talk to you about regular surveillance.

Ways to reduce your cancer risk

- stop smoking – lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer death in Australian women
- be SunSmart – protect yourself in the sun
- stay in shape – aim for a healthy body weight
- move your body – be physically active for at least 30 minutes on most or all days
- eat for health – choose a varied diet with plenty of fruit and vegetables and limit your intake of red meat
- avoid or limit alcohol – no more than two standard drinks a day and try some alcohol-free days a week.

Remember, if you have any concerns or questions, please contact your doctor.

Where can I get reliable information?

Cancer Council Helpline 13 11 20

Information and support for you and your family for the cost of a local call anywhere in Australia.

Cancer Council Australia website

www.cancer.org.au

BreastScreen Australia 13 20 50

www.cancerscreening.gov.au

Cancer Australia

www.canceraustralia.gov.au

National Bowel Cancer Screening Program Information Line 1800 118 868

www.cancerscreening.gov.au