

From Cancer Australia

Healthy lifestyles and the primary prevention of cancer summed up

It is estimated that at least a third of all cancer cases are preventable, and that potentially more than half of all cancers could be avoided through a combination of healthy lifestyle and regular screening. Prevention offers the most cost-effective long-term strategy for the control of cancer across the population.

In June 2015, Cancer Australia released *Lifestyle risk factors and the primary prevention of cancer*, a position statement that provides a summary of the best available evidence drawn from international literature on cancer risk reduction and modifiable risk factors.

The key findings compare risk factors for specific cancer types, and the key recommendations for adults to reduce their risk of cancer and stay healthy include: don't smoke; maintain a healthy weight; be active; eat a balanced and nutritious diet; limit alcohol consumption; be sun smart; and protect against infection.

While Cancer Australia research has found that 80% of Australians understand that they can reduce their risk of cancer through a healthy lifestyle, they are still putting their health at risk with poor lifestyle choices. Australian Bureau of Statistics data shows that 64.3% of Australians are overweight or obese, 14.5% are smokers, 44% do not

exercise enough, and 95% do not consume the daily recommendation of fruit and vegetables.

Research published in April 2015 (*Med J Aust* 2015; 202: 370-372) found that doctors are reluctant to discuss the issue of excess weight in their practices, despite Australia's high rates of overweight and obesity.

Health practitioners are encouraged to engage with their patients about lifestyle factors and cancer risk, and will be able to refer them to Cancer Australia's interactive online tool, *Check your cancer risk*, scheduled for release in late April 2016 and to be available at

<http://www.canceraustralia.gov.au/yourcancerrisk>.

Cancer Australia's healthy living resources can be found at <http://www.canceraustralia.gov.au/healthy-living>.



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