

Healthy body weight.

Reduce your risk of cancer

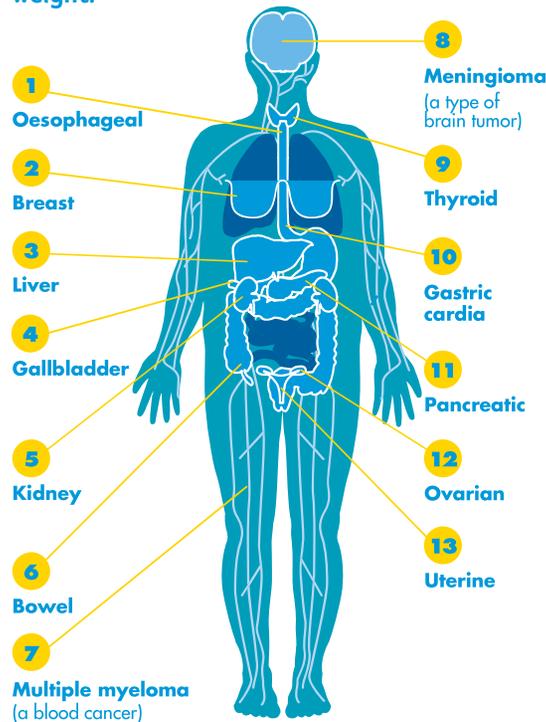
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Cancer Council



BODY WEIGHT AND CANCER RISK

Being above a healthy body weight increases your risk of 13 different cancers. It is also associated with other chronic diseases such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease and fatty liver disease. About two in every three (67%) Australians adults are overweight. But only about half of people know about the link between weight and cancer.

13 cancers are linked to being above a healthy weight.



Eating well and being active can help you avoid weight gain, maintain a healthy weight or lose weight to reduce your risk of cancer. This brochure provides practical information to help you do that.

These actions are beneficial for everyone and can reduce our cancer risk regardless of weight.

About overweight and obesity

Overweight and obesity are terms to describe high body weight and body fat. They can be measured using body mass index (BMI) or waist circumference. BMI looks at body weight relative to height.

Use the formula below or an online calculator to work out BMI.

$$\text{BMI} = \frac{\text{WEIGHT [kg]}}{\text{HEIGHT} \times \text{HEIGHT [metres]}}$$

BMI	Classification
Less than 18.5	Underweight
18.5 – 25	Healthy weight
25 – 30	Overweight
30 or more	Obese

Waist circumference gives a better indication of how much 'visceral fat' is around our waist and internal organs. This kind of fat is worse for our health than fat that is just under the skin.

WOMEN



80 cm

Increased health risk

88 cm

Greatly increased health risk

MEN



94 cm

Increased health risk

102 cm

Greatly increased health risk

Neither method is perfect but they can be used together to assess your chronic disease risk.

ENERGY BALANCE

Almost all foods and drinks contain energy (measured in kilojoules (kJ) or calories).

This energy is like fuel, and gets used for:

- Normal body function such as breathing and pumping your heart
- Physical activity as part of daily life such as walking around or gardening
- Planned activity (exercise) such as playing sport or cycling

Energy that is not used gets stored as body fat.

How much energy people need, and how and where it is stored in the body depends on a lot of factors, including genes and hormones. At the most basic level:

- To **maintain** body weight, energy intake from food and drinks needs to be **the same** as energy used.
- To **lose** weight, energy intake needs to be **less** than the energy used so that the body accesses its energy stores – body fat.
- To **gain** weight, energy intake needs to be **more** than the energy used so that the body adds to its energy stores – body fat.

Some of the things that contribute to weight gain are not in our control, but small changes can make a big difference!



What causes overweight and obesity?

Weight gain happens gradually as a result of consuming more energy (kilojoules from food and drinks) than your body needs.

Other factors can also lead to weight gain, like:

- The genes you inherited from your parents
- How efficiently your body turns food into energy (metabolism).
- Stress, low energy, low mood or lack of motivation contribute to food and activity choices
- Your surroundings: food supply and marketing, increased portion sizes, the built environment

What can I do if I'm above a healthy weight?

Avoiding further weight gain is an excellent first step. Eating well and being physically active can help stop weight gain and reduce your weight.

They will also improve your health and reduce your risk factors for cancer, regardless of whether or not your weight changes!

Your doctor or an Accredited Practising Dietitian can help you make changes and reduce your weight.



TIPS TO EAT WELL AND REDUCE ENERGY INTAKE

Cooking at home

When we eat out we often have large portions of rich food. Have fun in the kitchen and tweak family favourites to make them healthier:

- Bulk up your meals with vegetables, beans and lentils
- Make vegetables the main part of your meal and meat a side dish
- Cook by grilling, steaming or baking instead of frying
- Trim the fat and remove the skin from meat
- Choose reduced-fat dairy products

Eat more fruit and vegetables

Try to include at least one fruit or vegetable in every meal and snack:

- Add banana or grated carrot, zucchini or apple to home-made muffins, cakes and pikelets
- Top toast with avocado or tomato
- Add more vegies to your stir fries, salads, stews and curries.
- Canned and frozen vegetables are a quick and convenient option
- Add chickpeas, lentils or beans to your salads, curries or stews (tinned varieties are fine).



Portion sizes

Reaching and maintaining a healthy weight is not only about what you eat, but also about how much you eat. Sometimes eating less of your normal diet is enough to reach or maintain a healthy weight.

- Eat without distractions and tune into your hunger and fullness signals. Eat slowly and enjoy the food. It takes 10 to 20 minutes for your stomach to signal to your brain that you are full.
- Have nutritious snacks on hand so that you are not starving at meal times and tempted to over-eat
- Put some snacks into a bowl and put the rest of the packet away to limit non-hungry eating
- Choose smaller sizes when eating out.

Avoid sugary drinks

Sugary drinks provide lots of kilojoules and little or no nutrients. These are things like soft drinks, energy drinks, sports drinks and fruit drinks. Water, reduced fat milk and unsweetened tea or coffee are the best drink choices.

Avoid alcohol

Alcohol increases your chances of developing a number of cancers, including mouth and throat cancer, bowel cancer and breast cancer (in postmenopausal women).

Alcoholic drinks also contain a lot of kilojoules and little or no nutrients and so can easily contribute to weight gain. If you are trying to lose weight, avoid drinking alcohol.

For more information, see our Healthy Eating brochure.



TIPS TO BE MORE ACTIVE AND INCREASE ENERGY OUTPUT

At work

- Ride or walk all or some of the way to work
- Take the stairs
- Eat lunch away from your work space and squeeze in a 10-minute walk. Better yet, get a group involved and enjoy being active together
- Schedule walking meetings

At home

- The key to staying active is finding an exercise you enjoy. This can be an organised sport, rock climbing, gym class, running, or simply taking a walk at the park or along the coast
- Use technology to support your exercise goals. Create a motivating playlist, keep track of your steps via a fitness tracker or find an app that helps you move more

- Rope a friend into your exercise plans to help keep you motivated
- Try doing some light stretches/ yoga, hula hooping, skipping or cycling on an exercise bike while watching TV

With the family

- Walk the dog together
- Organise an outdoor activity each weekend. Remember to be SunSmart!
- Play backyard cricket, go cycling or enjoy the playground at the local park
- House tasks like gardening, cooking and vacuuming all count as physical activity – get your house in order while moving more!

For more information, see our physical activity brochure.



DIETS DON'T WORK, GOAL SETTING DOES!

Restrictive diets may reduce body weight in the short term, but people usually return to their usual habits and weight. We recommend gradual and realistic changes to your routine that will last a lifetime. It's about balancing your food and activity and enjoying the positive changes you are making.



1. Make it a S.M.A.R.T goal

- **Specific:** Have an exact goal in mind, rather than something vague. For example “drink one less sugary drink a day” is more specific than “eat better”
 - **Measurable:** Make it measurable so you will know when you have achieved it. For example, “Eat takeaway only once per week” is measurable, but “eat less takeaway foods” isn't.
 - **Achievable:** Be realistic about what you can do. It's better to set small goals and then build on them than to set a goal that is far out of your reach.
 - **Relevant:** Will this goal make you healthier and happier? Does it fit in with your lifestyle and the things that are important to you?
 - **Timely:** Put a date on your goal. This might be for when you would like to achieve your goal or when you will have started working towards it.
- 2. Check your goal** List the good and bad things about not making a change versus the benefits of working on your goal. This is the time to decide if this is the right goal for you!
- 3. Share** your goals with other people. They can help remind you and keep you motivated.
- 4. Celebrate** when you achieve your goals. Reward yourself with something that fits in with your goals. This will help motivate you to keep up your good work. Before you know it, it will be a habit and be easier to maintain.

If you don't achieve your goals, don't beat yourself up. It is rare for people to succeed completely the first time. Think about what you can do differently next time and learn from your experience!

For more tools and information to help you eat well, be active and set lifestyle goals visit

livelighter.com.au

What can I do to reduce my risk of cancer?

- Stop smoking
- Move your body
- Avoid excess weight gain
- Eat for health
- Be SunSmart
- Avoid alcohol
- Talk to your doctor about cancer



For support and information on cancer and cancer-related issues, call our Cancer Council nurse on **13 11 20** or visit **cancerwa.asn.au**.

Calls are confidential and available statewide Monday to Friday during business hours.