

CHECKING YOURSELF OUT

VERSUS[®]
CANCER

Cancer affects 1 in 3 of us once in our life time. At Versus Cancer we are committed to raising awareness of the disease and the fact that there are steps you can take to help prevent getting cancer, and to help your chances of survival if you do.

Leading a healthy lifestyle can lower your chance of getting cancer. Early detection of cancer can help your chance of survival. There are easy ways of checking for cancer such as breast or testicular cancer.

Introduction

Latest research shows that half of all cancers could be prevented by simple lifestyle changes.

Whether it is adopting a more healthy diet, giving up smoking or taking up more exercise, there are many healthy choices that can be made to reduce your risk of cancer.

“Smoking is the biggest avoidable risk factor for lung cancer, the most common form of cancer both in Manchester and the UK. It causes nine in ten cases of the disease. Quitting smoking may be very hard, but it will significantly reduce the risk.”

Dr Ron Stout

Medical Director &
Lung Cancer Specialist.
The Christie Hospital.

Smoking is the biggest single cause of cancer in the world. In fact it kills FIVE TIMES more people in the UK every year than road accidents, overdoses, murder and suicide all put together.

Not only does it cause one in four cancer deaths and is responsible for nine of out ten cases of lung cancer, smoking also increases your risk of getting cancer of the bladder, cervix, kidney, larynx (voice box), mouth, oesophagus, pancreas, stomach and some types of leukaemia.

Over a quarter of adults in the UK smoke cigarettes and despite the many warnings, smoking levels are at their highest amongst those aged 20 to 34. The worrying reality is that almost as many young people are starting to smoke as there are older people giving up.

Why are cigarettes so harmful?

When a cigarette burns it releases thousands of different chemicals, many of them harmful to your health.

The three main components of cigarette smoke are:

- > Nicotine // A fast-acting drug that turns smokers into addicts
- > Carbon monoxide // A poisonous gas that reduces oxygen in the blood stream causing breathing problems
- > Tar // A sticky black residue made up of thousands of chemicals that stays in the smoker's lungs and causes cancer

Nicotine is very addictive. But it is the tar and other chemicals in cigarettes that cause cancer. Other harmful chemicals found in cigarettes include:

- > Acetone // Used in nail varnish remover
- > Ammonia // Used in dry cleaning fluids
- > Arsenic // Used in pest control and insecticides
- > Benzene // Used in chemical manufacture
- > Cadmium // Used in batteries
- > Formaldehyde // Used to preserve dead bodies

**For advice on quitting smoking visit:
www.givingupsmoking.co.uk**

Make it Your Time to Quit

The risk of getting most cancers, including lung cancer, increases the longer and more you smoke. Cutting can help, but it is difficult to keep up. The only thing you can be sure will help is stopping altogether.

Not only will it save you a serious amount of cash – an average smoker spends £30,000 on cigarettes during their lifetime - it has untold health benefits and put simply, could save your life.

The sooner you give up smoking the better. After:

- > 20 minutes - your blood pressure and pulse return to normal
- > 8 hours - nicotine, carbon monoxide and oxygen levels in your blood begin to return to normal
- > 2 days - your lungs start to clear and your sense of taste and smell begin to return
- > 3 days - breathing is easier and your energy levels increase
- > 2-12 weeks - circulation improves and exercise gets easier
- > 3-9 months - breathing problems, coughing, shortness of breath and wheezing improve
- > 5 years - risk of having a heart attack falls to about half that of a smoker
- > 10 years - risk of lung cancer falls to about half that of a smoker. You have the same risk of a heart attack as someone who has never smoked

“Despite being bombarded by eating advice, the UK diet still leaves a lot to be desired and we continue to be a fast food nation. That’s inevitably going to cause problems to people’s health and given that a third of all cancers are linked to diet, people really need to think more about what they eat - it could save their lives one day.”

Loraine Gillespie

Dietetic Manager & Nutritional Expert.
The Christie Hospital.

We’re a nation of poor eaters, with less than a quarter of people aged 19 to 64 eating the recommended five portions of fruit and vegetables per day. And it is set to get worse with children and younger people eating even less healthily than the older generations.

A third of all cancers could be caused by a bad diet, yet experts suggest that eating more fruit and vegetables could reduce the risk by 20%. And those who eat the most may lower their risk by up to a third compared to those who eat the least.

Diet influences risk of cancers of the bowel, stomach, mouth, larynx and oesophagus. It can also contribute to the risk of many other cancers including breast and prostate.

Scientists are working every day to discover more about the links between diet and cancer. It’s a very complicated subject. Other factors such as genes and metabolism play a part, and it is still not clear whether particular foods protect us from cancer and others cause it.

One thing is clear though - there are general types of foods that can help to keep us healthy.

Experts suggest the following tips:

Fruit and veg.

- > Eat at least five portions of fruit and vegetables a day - frozen, tinned or fresh.
- > Fruit and vegetables are a good way to get vitamins, minerals and fibre.
- > One portion is around two serving spoons of carrots, a bowl of salad, an orange or a glass of fruit juice.
- > Eat vegetables whilst they’re still crunchy - don’t overcook them.

Eat foods that have a high-fibre content:

- > As well as fruit and veg, this also includes wholegrain cereals, wholemeal bread, brown rice, wholemeal pasta and pulses such as lentils or even baked beans.
- > Fibre can help to fill you up. Eating fruit as a snack between meals can help fill you up and may help with hunger if you are trying to lose weight.
- > It prevents constipation and may reduce your risk of bowel cancer.

Don’t eat too many fatty and processed foods:

- > Limit red meat to maximum of 80 grams per day. Choose fish and poultry.
- > Cut down on your saturated fats e.g. lard, butter, fatty meats, meat products e.g. pate, sausages, meat pies, take away foods.

- > Use small amounts of unsaturated fats instead e.g. polyunsaturated fats – sunflower, soya, corn oil, sesame or monounsaturated fats - olive oil or rapeseed oils.
- > Omega 3 fats which are unsaturated fats can have health benefits, they are found in oily fish, sardines, tuna (fresh), pilchards, mackerel and small amounts in walnuts, rapeseed oil, soya and flax. It is recommended up to 1 portion a week of oily fish for adults (1 portion = 140 grams) and 1 portion of white fish a week (e.g. cod, haddock). For pregnant women or children over 12 years no more than 2 portions a week.
- > Avoid being overweight. Avoid burnt / charred foods e.g. burnt toast or burnt meats, consume occasionally meat or fish cooked in direct flames.

For more advice visit:
www.5aday.nhs.uk and
[www.foodstandards.gov.uk/
healthiereating/](http://www.foodstandards.gov.uk/healthiereating/)

Body Weight

“People need to maintain a healthy body weight if they want to reduce their cancer risk. Obesity is now the second most important avoidable cause of cancer after smoking, and it is certainly worrying that people with a healthy body weight are now in the minority.”

Dr Ron Stout

Medical Director
The Christie Hospital.

Half of men and a third of women in the UK are overweight and a further 23% are obese – meaning that people with a healthy body weight are in the minority.

It says it all that being overweight puts you at almost as much risk of developing cancer as if you'd smoked all your life. At least 5% of cancers in women and 3% in men are caused by being overweight. Infact 12,000 people could actually avoid getting cancer every year by maintaining a healthy weight.

Being overweight increases your risk of getting cancer of the womb, kidney, colon and oesophagus. It is also linked to breast cancer in women who have been through the menopause.

Am I overweight?

You can find out whether your weight is within the health range by calculating your body mass index. For a BMI chart check here: <http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk/interactivetools/default.asp>

The best way to lose weight is to eat more healthily and become more active. If you don't know where to start then your GP or NHS Direct (0845 46 47) will be able to offer advice. A combination of healthy eating and regular exercise will help you maintain your target body weight.

Physical Activity

“Keeping fit by taking lots of exercise is invaluable in preventing cancer. With breast cancer in particular, being active can reduce risk by up to 40%. We're not suggesting going and joining the nearest gym immediately – even small things like taking the stairs instead of the lift can make a difference.”

Professor Tony Howell

Breast Cancer Specialist.
The Christie Hospital.

Inactive lifestyles account for 5% of all cancer deaths. And in our increasingly sedentary society with only 37% of men and 25% of women managing to do the recommended 30 minutes of moderate physical activity five times a week, it is a statistic that could potentially get a whole lot worse.

Not moving around increases your risk of colon and breast cancer. Inactivity has also been linked to cancers of the lung, womb and prostate.

Fortunately, the negative effects of a lazy lifestyle are reversible – becoming more active can probably halve your risk of colon cancer, as well as having untold other health benefits including reducing diabetes, osteoporosis, stroke and heart disease.

If you want to become active, there's no need to start by joining an expensive gym or entering the London Marathon! Simple lifestyle changes can make a huge difference. Here's a few suggestions:

- > Always take the stairs instead of the lift.
- > Walk to work, or if that's not possible, park further away or get off the bus a stop early.
- > Walk to the shops.
- > Go for a walk with colleagues during your lunch break.
- > Try swimming at your local leisure centre.

And if you want to be really adventurous, why not sign up for one of Christie's events – visit www.Christie's.org for more details.

“Sunburn and subsequent skin damage can take place even in the UK. If skin cancer is detected early, it can generally be cured. But you need to know what to look for and where to look. Always be alert to changes in your skin such as an existing mole that has changed shape, colour or has started bleeding, any lumps, sores that will not heal, itching or rough, scaly patches or growths.”

Dr Earnest Allan

Skin Cancer Specialist.
The Christie Hospital.

Is a tan really worth dying for? There are over 69,000 cases of skin cancer and 2,000 deaths from the disease in the UK alone every year. Although most of us are aware of the dangers of too much sun exposure, we are still not doing enough to protect ourselves.

Most skin cancers are caused by damage from UV rays in sunlight. Sunbeds also emit UV rays that damage your skin.

Scientists estimate that heavy sun exposure causes at least two thirds of all malignant melanomas and up to 90% of all non-melanoma skin cancers – and intense, intermittent sun exposure, such as holiday sunbathing, poses the greatest risk of all.

Look After Your Skin

If you protect yourself from the sun and don't use sunbeds, then you can greatly reduce your risk of skin cancer.

You should also try to:

- > Stay in the shade between 1 and 3pm
- > Make sure you never burn
- > Always cover up with a hat, t-shirt and sunglasses
- > Always use sun cream – factor 15 and above
- > Always report any mole changes or unusual skin growths to your doctor

For further advice on keeping safe in the sun, visit www.cancerresearchuk.org/sunsmart/.

Self Awareness

Be Aware

Being aware of what could happen to your own body and how you might be affected from cancer could one day save your life. Just by keeping an eye on yourself, unusual changes can be spotted and acted upon quickly.

Here's what you need to think about:

- > Family history.
- > Body awareness & self checking.
- > Screening.
- > Signs & symptoms.

Family History

Children don't inherit cancer, but they do inherit the risk of cancer. Cancer is caused by faulty genes and it is possible that those genes can be passed on to your children.

This does not mean they will definitely get cancer. But it does mean they have a greater risk. Between five and 10% of all cancers are inherited by faulty genes.

Am I at risk?

There is a possibility that cancer may run in your family if on one side of the family:

- > There are several cancers of the same type.
- > There are several cases of rare cancers.
- > Members developed cancer before the age of 50.
- > Members developed multiple cancer tumours (for example in both breasts).
- > If you are worried about your family history of cancer, your first step should be to visit your GP who will advise you about what to do next.

Body Awareness & Checking

Nobody knows your own body like you do. And if you know what is normal for you, then you are more likely to be able to spot the small changes that could be early signs of cancer.

Cancers that are often found by people checking their own bodies include skin, breast and testicular cancer. Checking your body will not reduce your chances of getting cancer. But treatments are much more likely to be successful if it is found at an early stage.

So how do you do it?

Checking your skin

Skin cancer is more likely to be treated successfully if it is caught early. There are two main types – non-melanoma and malignant melanoma.

Non-melanoma

This type of skin cancer is common and easily treatable. It usually affects older people and appears on skin areas exposed to the sun. Look out for:

- > A new growth or sore which does not heal within four weeks.
- > A spot or sore which continues to itch, hurt, crust, scab or bleed.
- > Persistent skin ulcers not explained by other causes.

Unfortunately this is the more serious kind. It can affect young people but is more common with older age.

See your doctor immediately if you have a mole that:

- > Is new or growing.
- > Has a ragged edge.
- > Contains different colours.
- > Is inflamed or has a red edge.
- > Is bleeding, oozing or crusting.
- > Feels funny or itches.
- > Is bigger than all your other moles.

Checking your breasts

A woman's breasts will change in size and shape during different times in their lives and during the menstrual cycle. Knowing what your breasts feel like at different times can help you to spot any changes.

Early detection can save lives.

There can be many reasons for changes other than breast cancer, but anything unusual should be reported to your doctor straight away.

Cancer Research UK advise following this five point code:

- 1 Know what is normal for you.
- 2 Look at and feel your breasts.
- 3 Know what changes to look for.
- 4 Report any changes without delay.
- 5 Go for breast screening if you are 50 or over.

Changes to look for:

- > Changes in the size, shape or feel of your breasts
- > A new lump or thickening in one breast or armpit
- > Puckering, dimpling or redness of the skin
- > Changes in the position of the nipple or nipple discharge
- > New pain or discomfort that it is only on one side

For more information, visit the NHS Breast Awareness page.

Checking your testicles

Testicular cancer, fortunately, is rare. But it is still the most common cancer in men aged 20 to 39. Checking your testicles regularly will help you recognise what is normal for you:

How to do it:

The best time to check your testicles is in, or just after, the bath or shower because the muscles in the scrotum will be more relaxed.

Hold your scrotum in your hands, so that you can feel the size and weight of each testicle. It is common for one testicle to be slightly larger and it may also hang lower than the other.

Feel each testicle and roll it between your thumb and finger. It should feel smooth. You should feel a soft, tender tube towards the back of each testicle. This is normal.

Testicular cancer usually only appears in one testicle. Look out for:

- > A hard lump on the front or side of a testicle.
- > Swelling or enlargement of a testicle
- > Pain or discomfort in the scrotum or testicles.
- > An unusual difference between one testicle and the other.
- > A heavy or dragging feeling in the scrotum.
- > A dull ache in the lower stomach, groin or scrotum.

If you do notice any changes, it is important you see your GP immediately.

For more information visit <http://www.icr.ac.uk/everyman/>

Checking for Breast Cancer

1 woman in 9 in the United Kingdom will develop breast cancer during her lifetime.

Each year 41,000 women are newly diagnosed with breast cancer and on average 13,000 women will die from the disease. However survival rates are improving with on average 77 per cent of women still alive five years later.

Nearly 80% of all breast cancers are detected by women who report unusual changes to their doctor. This statistic highlights the importance of being breast aware.

To be breast aware means becoming familiar with how your breasts look and feel. You should understand how your breasts may change at different times during the month and also as you get older. The important thing is to recognise which changes are usual and which are not. Make sure you know what is normal for you.

For some women, breasts become enlarged, tender and lumpy just before a period, and then return to normal once the period is over, others may have swollen breasts throughout their cycle. Age, pregnancy, Hormone Replacement Therapy and the menopause can all affect the size and feel of your breasts.

You can help yourself by checking your breasts at least once a month from the age of 20. At this early age, any small lumps are probably just normal breast glands and ducts. Over time you will get used to how your breasts normally feel so that you're able to tell if a new lump appears.

Check your breasts a few days after your period when your breasts aren't so sore. If you don't have periods or if they come at varying times, check your breasts at the same time every month.

Why not try doing it in the shower, using your hands to wash yourself rather than a sponge or flannel? Just a few minutes every now and then could help save your life. Look for these changes, and remember, if you are in any doubt visit your doctor.

Self Examination

1> Start by standing in front of a mirror. Look at your breasts with your arms at your side, with your arms raised behind your head, and with your arms on your hips and your chest muscles flexed.

2> Next, lie down with a pillow under your left shoulder. Put your left hand behind your head and feel your left breast with the pads of the 3 middle fingers on your right hand.

3> Start at the outer edge and work around your breast in circles, getting closer to your nipple with each circle.

4> Be sure to include the area up to your collarbone and out to your armpit. You have lymph nodes in this area. Cancer can spread to lymph node tissue. Do the same thing to your right breast with a pillow under your right shoulder.

5> After you've finished checking your breast, squeeze your nipple gently and look for discharge (fluid coming out of the nipple).

Checking for Testicular Cancer

Testicular cancer is the most common form of cancer in men between the aged of 15 and 45. Currently about 2000 men develop the disease every year in the UK.

Fortunately, up to 99% of testicular cancers can be cured if caught at an early stage. Even when these tumours spread they can still be cured in approximately 95% of cases.

Testicular cancer normally presents itself as a lump in the testicle and regular examination of the testicle can, in most instances, detect testicular cancer at an early stage. If you do find a lump in your testicles, you should visit your GP, who will arrange for further investigations to be carried out.

If you have any of the following symptoms, you should also go and see your doctor:

- > A lump in either testicle.
- > Any enlargement of a testicle.
- > A feeling of heaviness in the scrotum.
- > A dull ache in the abdomen or groin.
- > A sudden collection of fluid in the scrotum.
- > Enlargement or tenderness of the breasts.

Self Examination

A guide to self examination. Here's how to do it. You should do this regularly and you'll probably find that it's easier after a warm bath or shower as the scrotal skin will be more relaxed.

- 1> Most lumps found on the testicles are benign, but if you do spot any changes in size, shape or weight, you should report these to your GP.
- 2> Support the scrotum in the palm of your hand and become familiar with the size and weight of each testicle.
- 3> Examine each testicle by rolling it between your finger and thumb. Press gently to feel for lumps, swellings, or changes in firmness.
- 4> Remember each testicle has an epididymis tube at the top which carries sperm to the penis. Don't panic if you feel this – it is normal.

Screening

Screening for cancer involves testing large groups of healthy people for any early signs. This can help doctors find any abnormal changes before symptoms develop.

In the UK, screening currently takes place for breast and cervical cancer. Scientists are also looking at screening for bowel and prostate cancer.

If you are sent a reminder to book an appointment, please don't ignore it. It's an appointment that could save your life.

Breast screening

Local UK health services invite women aged 50 to 70 for breast screening every three years.

During screening, breasts are examined using an x-ray which can find breast cancers at a very early stage when they are too small to see or feel.

Breast screening is very effective, saving hundreds of lives every year, but unfortunately it is not as effective at finding changes in women younger than 50, so it is vital that women learn to check themselves on a regular basis.

For more information about breast screening visit <http://www.cancerscreening.nhs.uk/breastscreen/index.html>.

Cervical screening

Otherwise known as smear tests, women should have cervical screening every three to five years from aged 25 to their early sixties.

At screening, the doctor or nurse takes a sample of cells from your cervix using a spatula or small brush. These are then examined under a microscope in a laboratory and if there are any causes for concern you will be contacted for further investigations.

The test helps doctors find early changes before they actually develop into cervical cancer. And treating these early changes can stop the cancer developing, saving the lives of thousands of women every year.

For more information about cervical screening, visit <http://www.cancerscreening.nhs.uk/cervical/screening.html>

Signs & Symptoms

Its impossible to list all the symptoms, there are more than 200 different types of cancer. But there are certain changes in your body that you should look out for and report to your GP as soon as possible if you spot any:

These are:

- > A new or unusual lump or swelling anywhere on your body.
- > A sore that will not heal, anywhere on your body or in your mouth.
- > A change in the shape, size or colour of a mole.
- > Blood in your urine or bowel motions.
- > A cough, croaky voice or difficulty swallowing that lasts longer than 4 weeks.
- > A change to looser or more frequent bowel motions lasting longer than 4 - 6 weeks.
- > Difficulty passing urine.
- > Unexplained weight loss.
- > Bleeding from the vagina after the menopause or between periods.
- > Unexplained pain or ache that lasts longer than 4 weeks.

