

Women's Health & Cancer Toolkit

Find out about cancer signs and symptoms and the national screening programmes available.

Contents

Section	Page
Introduction	3
Signs and symptoms of cancer	4
Cancer screening	5
Bowel cancer	6
Lung cancer	8
Breast cancer	11
Cervical screening	13
The HPV vaccine	16
Cancer prevention and lowering risk	18
Smoking	19
Diet and nutrition	21
Physical activity	22
Alcohol	23
Sun safety	24
Key things to remember	25
The NHS App	26
Additional resources	27

Introduction

This toolkit outlines key information about cancer signs and symptoms, cancer screening programmes offered by NHS England, as well as information about prevention and lowering your risk of developing cancer.

The Women's Health and Cancer Toolkit covers:

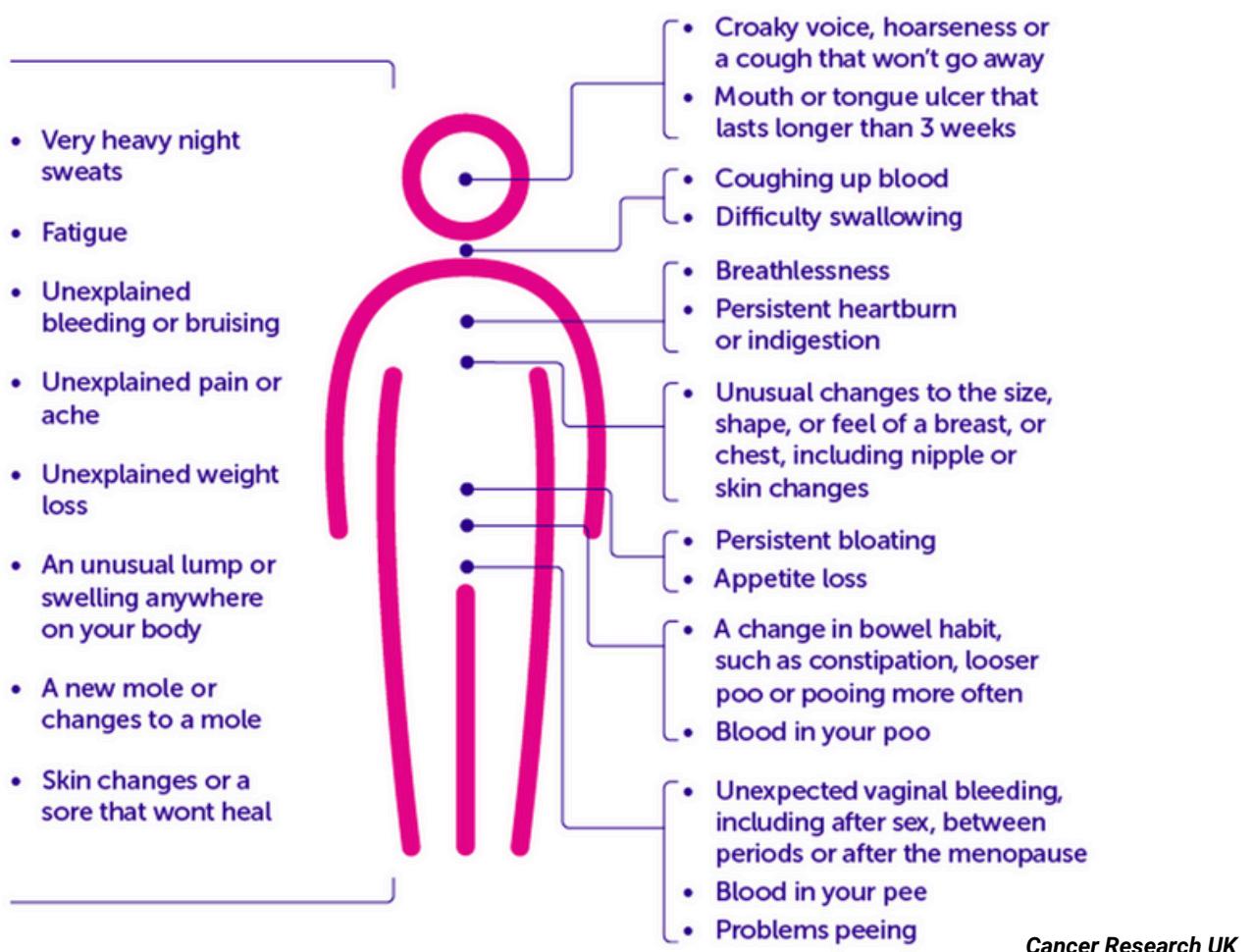
- Bowel cancer screening
- Breast cancer screening
- Cervical screening
- Lung cancer screening
- The HPV vaccine
- Prevention and lowering risk

Signs and Symptoms

Cancer is a condition where cells in the body grow in an uncontrolled way. Cancer can affect any part of your body, including your organs, blood, bone marrow and immune system.

You should always make an appointment with your GP practice if you notice a change that isn't normal for you.

Here are some of the signs and symptoms could be a sign of cancer:



Many of these signs and symptoms are more often caused by something less serious than cancer - but if it is cancer, spotting it early can make a real difference. The earlier it's picked up there is a better chance of successful treatment.

Remember:

- You won't be wasting your doctor's time
- Try not to be embarrassed
- What you tell your GP is confidential
- Doctors are used to discussing intimate problems and will try to put you at ease

Early diagnosis saves lives.

Cancer Screening

What is cancer screening?

Cancer screening is for people who do not have symptoms. Screening means testing people for early signs of cancer, or for early changes that could develop into cancer if left untreated.

England has 3 national cancer screening programmes:

- Bowel cancer screening
- Breast cancer screening
- Cervical screening

Lung cancer screening is not yet a national screening programme but is available across north west and south west London. It is offered to people aged 55-74 with any history of smoking who are registered with a participating GP practice. There is currently no screening programme for prostate cancer.

What is the cancer screening process?

Eligible people will automatically be invited for screening if they are registered with a GP practice.

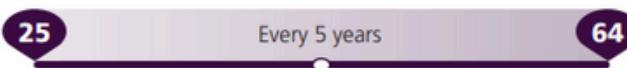
If you are eligible, you will get a letter inviting you to take part in screening with information about the test and how to take part. You can see the eligibility and further details about each of the national screening programmes below:

When invited for screening, please take up the offer.

Remember, cancer screening is for people who do not have symptoms. If you have symptoms or have noticed anything that is not normal for you, you should make an appointment with your GP practice to discuss your concerns.

Cervical screening

- **Who:** All women and people with a cervix
- **Age:** 25-64
- **How:** Receive invitation through the NHS App, by text or by letter



From 1 July 2025, those eligible will be invited for screening every 5 years, unless previous history suggests they should be screened more regularly.

Breast screening

- **Who:** All women
- **Age:** 50-71
- **How:** Receive invitation letter



Bowel screening

- **Who:** Everyone
- **Age:** 50-74
- **How:** Receive bowel screening test in post



Bowel Cancer

Bowel cancer is cancer that starts in the large bowel (colon) and the back passage (rectum). It is also known as colorectal cancer.

Both men and women can get bowel cancer and it is more common in older people.

The risk of developing bowel cancer depends on many factors, including:

- age
- family history
- genetic conditions such as familial adenomatous polyposis (FAP), Lynch syndrome, ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease
- diet and lifestyle

Symptoms of bowel cancer

The symptoms of bowel cancer can include:

- bleeding from the back passage (rectum) or blood in your poo
- a change in your normal bowel habit, such as looser poo, pooing more often or constipation
- a lump that your doctor can feel in your back passage or tummy (abdomen), more commonly on the right side
- a feeling of needing to strain in your back passage (as if you need to poo), even after opening your bowels
- losing weight without trying
- pain in your abdomen or back passage
- tiredness and breathlessness caused by a lower-than-normal level of red blood cells (anaemia)

Bowel cancer screening

Bowel cancer screening aims to find bowel cancer early, when there is the best chance of being successfully treated.

Bowel cancer screening is available to everyone between the ages of 50 to 74 years. All invitations to participate in bowel screening will soon be sent via the NHS App in the first instance (so please turn your notifications on). For those who don't have the NHS App or do not respond, they will receive invitations either via text or by post.

A bowel cancer testing kit is sent in the post every 2 years to those who are eligible. You need to be registered with a GP to receive your screening invitations. The test is called FIT - Faecal Immunochemical Test (FIT) – and looks for invisible blood in the stool.

You do the test at home. The kit contains instructions of how to do the test and includes a prepaid envelope to send the sample to the laboratory for testing.

You should get the results within a few weeks. The letter will tell you what, if anything, you need to do next.

If you're 75 or over and you wish to continue being screened for bowel cancer, you can ask for a FIT test kit every 2 years by phoning the free bowel cancer screening helpline on **0800 707 60 60**.

Bowel cancer screening - FAQs

Will the FIT test kit tell me if I have cancer?

No, the FIT kit test does not diagnose bowel cancer; however, the results of the test will show if there is any blood present in your sample.

What happens after I send off my sample?

Your results letter is usually sent within two weeks. If no trace of blood is found, you will simply get an all-clear with no further testing required. If there are traces of blood found in your sample, you will be invited in for further investigations, normally a colonoscopy.

Why isn't everyone under 50 invited?

Because most bowel cancers (over 90%) occur in people aged 50 and over, the bowel cancer screening programme focuses on this age group. However, anyone with symptoms—under 50 or older—should contact their GP practice promptly.

What if I haven't received my kit or invitation?

Check that your contact details at your GP practice are accurate and up to date. If you are eligible and still yet to receive a kit, call the bowel cancer screening helpline on **0800 707 6060**.

Lung Cancer

Lung cancer starts in the windpipe (trachea), the main airway (bronchus) or the lung tissue. Cancer that starts in the lung is called primary lung cancer.

There are 2 main types of primary lung cancer:

- non small cell lung cancer
- small cell lung cancer

The most common type is non small cell lung cancer.

Primary lung cancer differs from cancer that spreads to your lungs from somewhere else in your body. This is called secondary lung cancer.

Lung cancer is more common as you get older. Around 45 out of 100 people (around 45%) diagnosed with lung cancer in the UK are aged 75 and older.

Smoking is the most common cause (accounting for more than 70 out of 100 cases). Although people who have never smoked can also develop lung cancer.

Symptoms of lung cancer

There are many different signs of lung cancer. Some lung cancer symptoms, such as a persistent cough or shortness of breath, are more common and easier to recognise than others.

It is really important to be aware of the symptoms of lung cancer – regardless of whether you have smoked or not. Lung cancer can happen to anyone so if you are experiencing any of the following, you should contact your GP practice:

- A persistent cough (that lasts for three weeks or more)
- Feeling breathless for no reason
- Repeat chest infections or chest infections that haven't improved after having treatment
- Losing weight and/or loss of appetite
- Coughing up blood or blood in your phlegm (spit)
- A cough that changes or gets worse
- Unexplained tiredness or lack of energy
- Chest or shoulder pain

Less common symptoms include: back pain, wheezing, a hoarse voice, finger clubbing (where the tips of your fingers swell around your nail), difficulty swallowing, or a swelling in your face or neck.

Lung Cancer Screening

There are often no signs or symptoms of lung cancer at an early stage. Lung cancer screening can find lung cancer at its earliest stage when it is easier to treat, often before you have any symptoms.

Lung cancer screening can help diagnose lung cancer as early as possible.

Screening is currently being rolled out across England and is available for eligible people aged between 55-74 years old who smoke or used to smoke and are registered with a participating GP practice.

Of those picked up through the Lung Cancer Screening Programme, 75% are diagnosed with stage 1 and 2 when treatment can be more successful.

There are **two parts to lung cancer screening:**

1. Lung health check: After you receive a letter inviting you to take part, a patient care advisor (a non-medical professional) will call you to carry out a lung health check assessment over the phone, which takes around 15 minutes. They will ask you a series of questions about your overall health, your lung health and your smoking history. Your risk of lung cancer will be calculated and this will decide next steps.

2. In person appointment: If your assessment finds that you meet a certain level of risk, you will be offered an in person appointment with a nurse and, if suitable, a CT scan of your chest. This will take place at a local mobile unit or NHS hospital.



**Lung
Cancer
Screening**

What you need to know



Lung cancer screening - FAQs

I feel fine so why do I need to go?

Many people with early-stage lung cancer have no symptoms. One of the main aims of this programme is to detect lung cancer at the earliest opportunity when it is easier to treat. We strongly recommend you take up the invitation for lung cancer screening even if you feel well.

I'm not aged 55-74. Can I be screened?

Lung cancer screening is being offered only to current or former smokers aged between 55-74 because the risk of lung cancer and the benefits of early detection through screening outweigh any potential risks or harms for this specific group.

If you are not eligible for screening but have any symptoms or concerns about your lung health, you should contact your GP practice to arrange an appointment.

Why is lung cancer screening only available to people who have smoked?

People with a history of smoking are at a higher risk of lung disease or lung cancer than people who have never smoked. However, anyone can get lung cancer so if you have any concerns or are experiencing symptoms, contact your GP practice.

Is lung cancer screening only for cigarette smokers?

No, people who smoke or used to smoke any tobacco product, including cigarettes, pipes, cigars, roll ups, hookahs or shishas, may also be eligible for free lung cancer screening.

I used to smoke so why haven't I been invited?

To be invited for lung cancer screening, your GP practice needs to be participating in the programme and also needs to be aware that you have smoked and recorded this on your medical history.

If you think you are eligible, contact your GP practice to check your smoking record is up to date.

Breast Cancer

Breast cancer is when abnormal cells in the breast begin to grow and divide in an uncontrolled way and eventually form a growth, often referred to as a tumour. It normally starts in the cells that line the milk ducts of the breast.

Breast cancer is the most common cancer in the UK and is more common in women than men. Around 55,500 women and around 370 men are diagnosed in the UK each year.

Breast cancer risk can be affected by:

- age
- family history
- diet and lifestyle

Symptoms of breast cancer

The first symptom of breast cancer most people notice is usually a lump in their breast. However, there are other key symptoms of breast cancer to look out for:

- thickening in your breast or armpit
- a change in size, shape or feel of your breast
- skin changes in the breast such as puckering, dimpling, a rash or redness of the skin
- fluid leaking from the nipple in a woman who isn't pregnant or breastfeeding
- changes in the position of the nipple

The symptoms listed here are more often caused by other medical conditions. But if you have any of them it is important to make an appointment with your GP practice.

Breast cancer screening

Breast cancer screening aims to find breast cancer early, when there is the best chance of being successfully treated. Screening involves having an x-ray of your breast called a mammogram. This will be taken by a female clinician.

Breast screening is for women and some trans or non-binary people between the ages of 50 and 71, every 3 years. All invitations for breast screening will soon be sent via the NHS App in the first instance (so please turn your notifications on). For those who don't have the NHS App or do not respond, they will receive invitations either via text or by post.

You should get a letter with your results within 2 to 3 weeks. This will tell you what, if anything, you need to do next.

Breast cancer screening – FAQs

What is a mammogram?

A mammogram is an x-ray of the breasts. It is a method of finding breast cancer at a very early stage.

A female mammographer will compress your breasts – one at a time – between two x-ray plates to get clear images. The compression only lasts a few seconds and does not cause any harm to the breasts.

Are mammograms safe?

Any x-ray involves radiation, but mammograms only require a very low dose. The risk that such a low dose could cause a cancer is far outweighed by the benefits of early detection of breast cancer.

Does a mammogram hurt?

During the mammogram, the breast is tightly squeezed between two plates, which some women do find uncomfortable or mildly painful. However, this is necessary to get a clear image and only lasts for a few seconds.

How will I get my results?

Your results are usually sent by letter within 2–3 weeks. Your GP practice will also receive a copy.

If your images show no sign of cancer, you will be given the all clear and invited again for screening in 3 years' time. Some women will be called back for further assessment; approximately 4–5 in 100 women are invited for extra tests, which can include another mammogram, or an ultrasound and potentially a biopsy. In most cases, further assessment does not lead to a cancer diagnosis.

What do I do if I haven't been invited for breast screening?

Invitations depend on having your correct name, date of birth, and address registered with your GP practice. If you're within the screening age (50-71) and haven't been invited, contact your local breast screening service.

I'm over 71—can I still be screened?

Yes, though you're not automatically invited. Call your GP practice or local breast screening service to request an appointment every 3 years.

Cervical Cancer

Cervical cancer is when abnormal cells in the lining of the cervix grow uncontrollably and eventually form a growth, often referred to as tumour. The cervix is part of the female reproductive system. It is the lowest part of the womb and is at the top of the vagina.

The main cause of cervical cancer is long lasting (persistent) infection of certain types of the human papillomavirus (HPV). HPV is a common virus, and in most people the immune system clears the infection without any problems. Cervical cancer mostly affects women under the age of 45.

Symptoms of cervical cancer

Early cervical cancers and pre-cancerous cell changes don't usually have symptoms. However, the most common symptoms of cervical cancer include:

- unusual vaginal bleeding, e.g. bleeding in between periods or bleeding after sex
- pain or discomfort during sex
- vaginal discharge that is an unusual colour or odour
- pain in the area between the hip bones (pelvis)

Not everyone diagnosed with cervical cancer will have symptoms. That's why it's important to attend regular cervical screening.

Cervical screening

Cervical screening is a way of preventing cancer. It tests for a virus called human papillomavirus (HPV). High-risk HPV can cause cervical cells to become abnormal. Virtually all cases of cervical cancer are linked to high-risk HPV.

The NHS cervical screening programme invites those eligible between the ages of 25 to 64 every 5 years. If HPV is detected, you may be invited more regularly.

All invitations for cervical screening are now being sent via the NHS App in the first instance (so please turn your notifications on). For those who don't have the NHS App or do not respond, they will receive invitations either via text or by post.

A doctor or nurse will usually carry out your cervical screening test. You can ask for a female clinician. They will ask you a few questions about your period, if you have experienced any unusual bleeding, and if you are taking any hormonal medication.

You will undress from the waist down and lie on a couch; a speculum is gently inserted to access the cervix. A small brush takes a cell sample. The procedure takes under 5 minutes, with the whole visit lasting about 10 minutes.

This programme is for people without symptoms. If you experience unusual vaginal bleeding, discharge, or pelvic pain, regardless of age or your screening history, don't wait for your screening invitation but contact your GP practice.

NHS England has an ambition to eliminate cervical cancer by 2040. To achieve this, the NHS needs to ensure people are coming forward for cervical screening, and that as many people as possible are being vaccinated against HPV.

Cervical screening – FAQs

Why is cervical screening important?

Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) is the main cause of cervical cancer. It can be passed on without anyone knowing they have it, which is why it is important that people take part in cervical screening when invited.

It is important that family members support women to participate in screening.

Who is the test for?

Screening is for everyone regardless of marital or relationship status, or sexual orientation. It does not matter if you have not been in a relationship, are single or you are married to a single partner. The test will not affect virginity.

What if I am worried about attending cervical screening?

If you are worried, please arrange to speak to a practice nurse. This will give you a chance to discuss any concerns and consider how they can make you feel most comfortable.

How and when will I get results?

Results are now sent through the NHS App or by letter usually within 2 to 6 weeks. If your test indicates you do not have HPV, your next cervical screen will be in 5 years.

If your result indicates you have HPV, you may be invited in for more frequent tests or referred for further investigations.

What do I do if I haven't received my cervical screening invitation?

Invitations depend on having your correct name, date of birth, and address registered with your GP practice. If you're within the screening age (25-64) and haven't been invited, contact your GP practice to ask for a cervical screen.

Will I be invited for cervical screening if I am trans or non-binary people?

If you're a trans man or are non-binary and have a cervix, how you're invited depends on the sex you're registered with at a GP surgery.

- If you're registered as female with your GP practice, you'll automatically be invited for cervical screening.
- If you're registered as anything other than female, such as male or indeterminate, you may not be invited for cervical screening automatically – speak to your GP practice to ask to have your invitations sent automatically.

Why has the screening interval changed from 3 to 5 years?

From July 2025, routine intervals increased from 3 to 5 years for those aged 25–64 who test HPV-negative. HPV testing is more sensitive than previous tests, offering strong protection and allowing for longer between screening invites. The HPV vaccine has also contributed to making it safer to wait longer between cervical screens.

Cancer Screening Checker

Visit:

<https://www.standuptocancer.org.uk/screening-checker>

or scan the QR code to use Stand Up To Cancer's
Screening Checker



The HPV Vaccine

The HPV vaccine protects against human papillomavirus (HPV), which can cause cervical cancer, anal cancer, and some head and neck cancers. HPV causes 9,684 cancers annually in the UK, with head and neck cancers (oropharyngeal cancer) now exceeding cervical cancer.

The HPV vaccine is one of the few vaccines that can actually prevent cancer. In fact, it's estimated that by 2058, the HPV vaccine could prevent more than 100,000 cases of cancer in the UK alone.

The vaccine is routinely offered to all boys and girls aged 12 to 13 in Year 8 at secondary school. This typically happens during the Spring Term. It is usually just the one dose.

If a child misses their vaccine, they can still catch up through their school nurse, GP practice or local vaccination team, up to the age of 25.

The HPV vaccine - FAQs

What is the HPV vaccine?

There is 1 type of HPV vaccine given in the UK (the Gardasil 9 vaccine). It contains no genetic or live material. The vaccine contains aluminium salt to boost people's immune response. The HPV vaccine used in the UK does not contain any porcine or other animal ingredients and is widely accepted as halal and kosher.

Is the HPV vaccine linked to sexual activity?

The HPV vaccine is not linked to sexual activity – it's about prevention. It is a preventive measure given before someone is likely to be exposed to HPV. That's why it's offered at ages 12–13, well before most people become sexually active and therefore before someone is likely to get exposed to HPV, offering much greater protection.

The vaccine does not encourage or require sexual activity, and getting vaccinated doesn't change sexual behaviour. Its purpose is purely health protection against HPV-related cancers and genital warts.

What cancers does the HPV vaccine prevent?

The HPV vaccine prevents head and neck cancers, cervical cancer, vaginal, anal and penile cancer.

When is the best time to have the HPV vaccine?

Young people who receive the vaccine aged 12 -13 have a 90% protection rate because the vaccine works best before any contact with HPV. Early vaccination ensures strong, long-lasting protection.

Do boys need the HPV vaccine?

Yes. HPV affects everyone, and vaccinating boys helps prevent cancers and reduces virus spread.

How many doses are needed?

- If your child is under 15 years old, 1 dose is recommended.
- If your child is 15 years or older, 2 doses spaced at least 6 months apart are recommended.
- If they are HIV positive or immunosuppressed a 3 dose schedule is recommended.
- If previously vaccinated or vaccinated abroad, any dose of Cervarix, Gardasil or Gardasil 9 given from 9 years of age would be considered valid.

Are there any side effects?

There can be mild side effects to the vaccine such as a sore arm at the injection site or mild fever or headache. Serious side effects are extremely rare.

What if my child did not have the vaccine at school?

If they are under 25 and have already received one dose by September 2023, they are considered fully vaccinated. Those who missed the vaccine at school can still catch up before their 25th birthday by contacting their GP practice and asking for the HPV vaccine.

If I've had the HPV vaccine, do I still need to go for regular cervical screening?

Yes, because whilst the HPV vaccine protects against most types of cervical cancers, it doesn't protect against all strains. It is important that anyone invited for cervical screening attends their routine appointment even if vaccinated.

Cancer Prevention and Lowering Risk

Can you reduce your risk of cancer?

Not all cancers are preventable but there are things you can do to reduce your risk of developing cancer. Research has shown that things like stopping smoking, keeping a healthy weight, staying safe in the sun, cutting down on alcohol and eating a healthy, balanced diet can reduce the risk of cancer.

It's never too late to start making positive changes to improve your health in the future.

Smoking

Every time you smoke a cigarette, your body is flooded with thousands of chemicals, many of which are poisonous. Smoking includes all types of inhaled tobacco, for example cigarettes and shisha.

Current research has not found a connection between cancer and e-cigarettes and vapes but they are not risk free. More research is needed to understand the long-term effects and potential harm to people's health.

Did you know?

- Teens whose parents smoke are **4 times as likely to take up smoking**
- The average smoker can save around **£49 a week by quitting smoking** - that's over £2,500 a year
- An average **45-minute shisha session**, is the equivalent of smoking 100 cigarettes in **one session**
- Smoking raises the risk of blood clots and **can cause type 2 diabetes**
- Almost **80% of tobacco smoke is invisible and has no smell** so you might not notice how far it spreads. Smoke can contain over **5,000 different chemicals** many of which are toxic to both people and pets, these can build up on surfaces and even your pet's fur.

Paan, bidi and shisha: Tobacco that you do not smoke, including paan, betel quid and chewing tobacco, is not a 'safe' way to use tobacco and can be as addictive as smoking.

Research has shown that using smokeless tobacco raises the risk of mouth cancer and oesophageal (food pipe) cancer.

Quitting Smoking

Supporting people to successfully stop smoking is one of the key ways in which we can help to improve overall health, not just from cancer, but many other medical problems.

The day you stop smoking, your body starts clearing itself of toxins and the repair process begins. The earlier you quit smoking, the more you're likely to benefit. But it's never too late – because quitting will improve your health whatever your age and no matter how long you have smoked.

You'll notice some benefits within days or weeks:

- your sense of taste and smell improves
- you start to breathe more easily
- you have more energy
- your mental health and wellbeing will improve

Your longer-term risks of cancer, lung disease, heart disease and stroke will also be significantly reduced:

- **after 1 year, the risk of heart attack halves compared to a smoker's**
- **after 10 years, the risk of death from lung cancer falls to half that of a smoker**
- **after 15 years, the risk of heart attack falls to the same as someone who has never smoked**

Evidence shows that after the withdrawal stage of quitting, people have reduced anxiety, depression and stress. People who have quit also have increased positive mood compared with people who continue to smoke.

Other benefits will follow, including better blood circulation to your heart and muscles, which will make physical activity easier; improved lung function, leading to reductions in any cough, wheezing or other breathing problems.

You will also be less likely to develop type 2 diabetes, bone disease including osteoporosis, eye disease and dementia.

Quitting Smoking

What happens when you quit?

The sooner you quit, the sooner you'll notice changes to your body and health. Look at what happens when you quit for good.



After 20 minutes

Check your pulse rate, it will already be starting to return to normal.



After 8 hours

Your oxygen levels are recovering, and the harmful carbon monoxide level in your blood will have reduced by half.



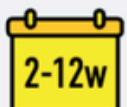
After 48 hours

Your carbon monoxide levels have dropped to that of a non-smoker. Your lungs are clearing out mucus and your senses of taste and smell are improving.



After 72 hours

If you notice that breathing feels easier, it's because your bronchial tubes have started to relax. Also your energy will be increasing.



After 2 to 12 weeks

Blood will be pumping through to your heart and muscles much better because your circulation will have improved.



After 3 to 9 months

Any coughs, wheezing or breathing problems will be improving as your lung function increases by up to 10%.



After 1 year

Great news! Your risk of heart attack will have halved compared with a smoker's.



After 10 years

More great news! Your risk of death from lung cancer will have halved compared with a smoker's.

NHS Better Health

Stop Smoking London

There isn't a one-size-fits-all way to quit smoking. You can choose options that work best for you, and that's where Stop Smoking London can help.

They can direct you to free services, which may include Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT), and provide guidance and support that will boost your chances of quitting.

Find out more at: [Stop Smoking London - We're Here to Help You Quit Smoking](https://www.smokinglessons.com)



Diet and Nutrition

Eating a healthy and balanced diet can reduce your risk of developing cancer. This is partly because of the food itself, but mainly because a healthy, balanced diet helps to keep a healthy weight.

A healthy diet means eating mostly:

- fruit and vegetables
- wholegrains such as wholewheat pasta, oats and wholemeal bread
- healthy protein sources like chicken, fish and pulses

And cutting down on:

- processed and red meat
- alcohol
- foods that are high in fat, sugar and salt

Eating red or processed meat may also increase the risk of bowel cancer, as it damages the cells of the bowel.

The main way diet affects the risk of cancer is to do with body weight. Eating lots of sugary food and drink, high-calorie food, and foods that are high in fat, sugar and salt, can lead to being overweight or obese.

Eating a healthy, balanced diet can help you to keep a healthy weight, which can reduce your risk of cancer. When it comes to cancer risk, your overall diet is more important than individual foods.

As part of a healthy, balanced diet eat more:

High-fibre foods: A diet high in fibre, including plenty of wholegrains, can help reduce the risk of bowel cancer. Wholegrains are foods like wholewheat pasta, oats and wholemeal bread. All wholegrains are high in fibre.

Foods that are high in fibre help you poo more often, and keep the gut healthy. This reduces cell damage in the bowel, which means bowel cancer is less likely.

Dairy: Dairy products, like milk, cheese and yogurt, can be part of a healthy, balanced diet. There is good evidence that eating and drinking dairy products lowers the risk of bowel cancer. This is likely to be because it is high in calcium.

Physical Activity

Exercise and physical activity helps us to maintain a healthy weight.

Keeping a healthy weight cuts your risk of cancer and other serious diseases. Being physically active means any movement that uses your muscles and more energy than when you're resting.

Physical activity can include:

- **moderate intensity** – this is when the activity makes you feel warmer and breathe faster, but you can still talk. This could include brisk walking, cycling, swimming, gardening or housework
- **vigorous intensity** – this is an activity that raises your heart rate and makes you start to sweat and feel out of breath. This could include running, aerobics, football and cycling

Being physically active doesn't have to mean joining a gym or an exercise class. It can also be walking to the shops, walking up the stairs, gardening or dancing.

Overweight and obesity is the second biggest cause of cancer in the UK. If you are overweight, you are more likely to get cancer than if you are a healthy weight.

Being overweight doesn't mean that you'll definitely develop cancer. But the risk is higher the more overweight you are and the longer you are overweight for. If you are overweight, avoiding putting on more weight and losing weight will help reduce your risk of cancer.

Did you know?

- Overweight and obesity is the **second biggest cause of cancer in the UK – causing more than 1 in 20 cancer cases.**
- Keeping a healthy weight **reduces the risk of 13 different types of cancer.**

There are lots of benefits to keeping a healthy weight. These include having increased energy, and less risk of conditions such as heart disease, stroke and joint pain.



UK Chief Medical Officers' physical activity guidelines for adults and older adults

Alcohol

Drinking alcohol increases the risk of cancer. Drinking alcohol doesn't mean that you'll definitely get cancer, but the risk is higher the more alcohol you drink.

People might talk about some alcoholic drinks being better or worse for you than others but all types of alcohol increase the risk of cancer - as it's the alcohol itself that causes damage, even in small amounts.

Alcohol is known to cause 7 types of cancer. This includes:

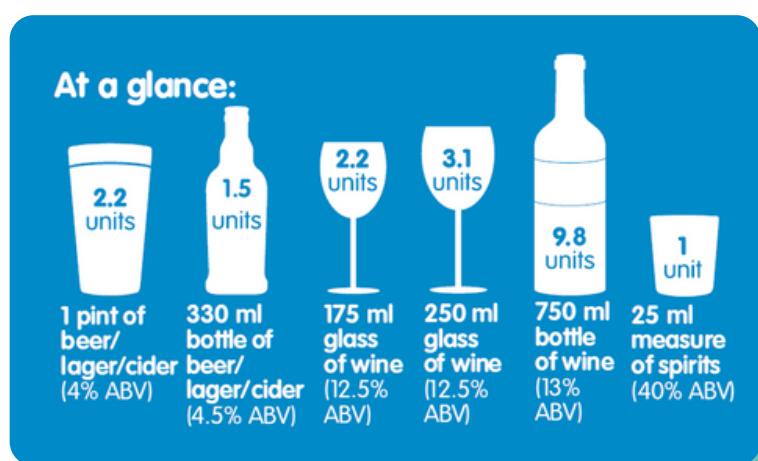
- Breast cancer and bowel cancer (two of the most common types)
- Mouth cancer
- Some types of throat cancer: oesophagus (food pipe), larynx (voice box) and pharynx (upper throat)
- Liver cancer

Did you know?

- **Drinking alcohol is worse for you if you also smoke.** When used together they increase the risk of cancer even more. This is because tobacco and alcohol have a combined effect that causes greater damage to our cells.
- **People who smoke and drink alcohol are at a higher risk of mouth and upper throat cancers.** Alcohol may cause changes to cells in the mouth and throat that make it easier to absorb the cancer-causing chemicals in tobacco smoke.
- Alcohol may change how the toxic chemicals in tobacco smoke are broken down in the body, making them even more harmful.

The more you can cut down on alcohol the more you can reduce your risk of cancer. Drinking less alcohol has lots of other health benefits too. You can reduce your risk of accidents, high blood pressure and liver disease by cutting back.

To keep health risks from alcohol to a low level (if you drink) **you are advised not to drink more than 14 units a week on a regular basis** and to spread your drinking over 3 or more days.



NHS Inform

Sun Safety

Ultraviolet (UV) radiation is a type of energy that is released naturally by the sun and artificially from sunbeds. Too much ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun can damage DNA in your skin cells.

Too much exposure to UV radiation is the main cause of skin cancer in the UK. Getting sunburnt increases your risk of skin cancer.

Up to 9 in 10 UK cases of melanoma, the most serious type of skin cancer, could be prevented by staying safe in the sun and avoiding sunbeds.

Remember that:

- No matter where you are, whether at home or on holiday, it's important to protect your skin when the sun is strong.
- The best way to enjoy the sun safely is to use shade, clothing and sunscreen together to protect your skin.
- Using sunscreen doesn't mean you can spend longer in the sun. But it's useful for protecting the parts of skin not covered by clothing or shade.

By using these three steps together, you can protect your skin and enjoy the sun safely.



Seek shade

Take a break under trees or umbrellas, especially in the middle of the day when the sun is strongest.



Cover up

Wear a top that covers your shoulders, a wide-brimmed hat and UV-protection sunglasses.



Apply sunscreen

Pick one with at least SPF 30 and 4 or 5 stars. Use it generously and regularly.

Key Things to Remember

- You **need to be registered with a GP practice** to get your screening invitations
- **Participate in cancer screening when you're invited** – such as bowel, breast or cervical screening
- **Download the NHS App as a good way to stay up to date** with your screening invitations
- Encourage people you know **to take up the offer of the HPV vaccine if eligible**
- Speak to a GP about genetic testing if a type of cancer runs in your family, a relative has been told they have a faulty gene linked to cancer, or you have 1 or more Jewish grandparents
- **Try to cut down on alcohol** and avoid drinking more than 14 units a week and avoid binge drinking
- **Try to lose weight if you're overweight**, or keep to a healthy weight
- **Try to quit smoking**
- **Follow advice on sunscreen and sun safety**, such as wearing sunscreen of at least 30 SPF and spending time in the shade, to protect your skin
- Eat a **balanced and varied diet**
- **Be physically active** – aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate activity or 75 minutes of vigorous activity over the course of a week

The NHS App

Download the NHS App to help manage your healthcare. The NHS App is owned and run by the NHS. It can be accessed by anyone aged 13 and over registered with an NHS GP practice in England.

Once you have verified your identity in the app, you will have easy, 24/7 access to a growing range of health services and information. It doesn't replace existing services and you can still contact your GP surgery in the usual ways.

With the NHS App you can quickly:

- contact your GP practice online and request appointments
- order repeat prescriptions without having to contact your GP practice, and choose where you want to collect them
- view your GP health record, including your medical history, test results, allergies, medicines and documents
- switch profiles in the app to access the health records, appointments and prescriptions of people you care for, including children
- browse NHS health information to read about symptoms, treatments and side effects
- find NHS services near you
- use 111 online to check if you need urgent medical help

Do more with the NHS App!



Visit:
<https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-app/>

or scan the QR code to download the NHS App



Additional Resources

- **NHS England:** <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/cancer/>
- **Stop Smoking London:** <https://stopsmokinglondon.com/>
- **NHS Better Health:** <https://www.nhs.uk/better-health/>
- **World Cancer Research Fund:** <https://www.wcrf.org/>
- **Drink Aware:** <https://www.drinkaware.co.uk/>
- **The Eatwell Guide:** <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/food-guidelines-and-food-labels/the-eatwell-guide/>
- **The NHS App:** www.nhs.uk/nhs-app

NHS