

Irish Cancer Prevention Network



An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Scaghástála
National Screening Service

Newsletter January 2022

Welcome to the Irish Cancer Prevention Network (ICPN) newsletter. This quarterly newsletter shares with you cancer prevention facts and initiatives.

You can contact the ICPN at prevention@cancercontrol.ie to share your cancer prevention initiatives.

ICPN Steps to Reduce your Cancer Risk: Facts

Each individual's risk of getting cancer is influenced by a wide range of factors. Things that we can't change (like our age and genetics) and things that we can change (like what we eat, whether we drink alcohol, exercise, and protect our skin from the sun).

However, **we can all take steps to reduce our risk of cancer.**

World Cancer Day: Steps to reduce your cancer risk

World Cancer Day (WCD) is an international awareness day held each year on the 4th of February. The day seeks to raise awareness of cancer and empower individuals, populations and governments to take action to prevent and tackle cancer.

The ICPN aims to increase knowledge of the practical steps we can all take to reduce cancer risk. The ICPN steps to reduce your cancer risk poster outlines 12 lifestyle and environmental factors and provides information on how they affect cancer risk and the action you can take to reduce your risk.

Did you know?

- Radon is a naturally occurring gas found in the environment. It can increase risk of lung cancer in people exposed to high levels over long periods of time. The [Environmental Protection Agency](#) website provides information on how to check your home for radon gas levels. It also provides advice on how to reduce levels in your home if you need to.
- Breastfeeding affects hormones in the body and protects cells in the breast from changes, reducing breast cancer risk. The longer you breastfeed for, the greater the protection against developing breast cancer. Get personal advice from the HSE lactation consultants [here](#).
- Eating healthy foods including fruit, vegetables and wholegrains provides the body with antioxidants, vitamins and minerals that can reduce your risk of cancer. Visit the [Irish Nutrition and Dietetics Institute webpage](#) for food facts and the [ICPN Food for thought, eating to reduce cancer risk webinar](#).
- Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in Ireland, with over 13,000 cases diagnosed annually. Most cases of skin cancer could be prevented by protecting our skin from ultraviolet radiation from the sun and artificial sources such as sunbeds. Visit the [SunSmart hub](#) to learn how to protect your skin.

The ICPN Steps to reduce your cancer risk poster can be downloaded [here](#).

Steps to reduce your cancer risk



Physical Activity

- Physical activity reduces risk of bowel, breast and womb cancer
- Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate physical activity or 75 minutes of vigorous activity across a week
- Moderate physical activity makes you a little out of breath but you can talk comfortably
- Vigorous activities will raise your heart rate, make you sweat and feel out of breath



Breastfeeding

- Breastfeeding reduces levels of certain hormones in the body and protects cells in the breast from changes, reducing breast cancer risk
- The greater the number of months spent breastfeeding, the greater the protection
- If you can, breastfeed your baby



Eating for Health

- Eating fruit, vegetables and wholegrains provide the body with antioxidants, vitamins and minerals that protect your body
- Red and processed meat contain chemicals that increase risk of bowel cancer. Aim to reduce the amount of red meat you eat as much as possible, to no more than 3 portions per week, and try to avoid processed meat altogether
- Coffee may reduce risk of some cancers, including liver cancer
- Choosing healthy food and avoiding 'fast-foods, sugary drinks and sweets helps maintain a healthy body weight which decreases risk of cancer



HRT

- Certain hormonal medications, including the Oral Contraceptive Pill (OCP) and hormone replacement therapy (HRT) can increase and decrease the risk of cancers for women
- Talk to your GP about whether these medications are right for you



Skin Protection

- To reduce risk of skin cancer protect your skin from the sun and never use sunbeds
- Follow the Healthy Ireland SunSmart steps, especially from April to September, even when it is cloudy
 - Slip on clothing that covers your skin
 - Slap on sunscreen, using factor 30+ for adults and 50+ for children
 - Slap on a wide-brimmed hat
 - Seek shade and always use a sunshade on a child's buggy
 - Slide on sunglasses to protect your eyes



Cancer Screening

- Consider taking part in organised cancer screening programmes for:
 - Breast cancer (women aged 50-69 years)
 - Cervical cancer (women and people with a cervix aged between 25-65 years)
 - Bowel cancer (people aged 60-69 years)
- For more information go to www.screeningservice.ie



Alcohol

- When alcohol is broken down in your body, it can damage your body's cells
- It increases the risk of at least 7 types of cancer, including mouth, throat, breast, stomach and liver
- You can reduce your risk of cancer if you do not drink alcohol
- The less you drink the lower the risk



Workplace

- Some workplaces involve exposure to cancer causing substances, such as arsenic, asbestos, ultraviolet radiation
- Follow your workplace health and safety instructions to help reduce the risk of your exposure to cancer-causing substances in your workplace



Radon

- Radon is a naturally occurring gas found in the environment. It can increase risk of lung cancer in people exposed to high levels of radon over long periods of time
- If you are a smoker and you live in a high radon area your risk of lung cancer is increased, so it is even more important to think about quitting smoking
- The [Environmental Protection Agency website](#) provides information on how to check your home for radon gas levels. It also provides advice on how to reduce levels in your home if you need to



Body Weight

- Too much body weight can affect hormone levels and your immune system, increasing your risk of cancer
- Maintain a healthy body weight throughout your lifetime, from childhood to adulthood to reduce your risk of 12 types of cancer



Smoking

- Tobacco contains chemicals that cause cancer. Tobacco products include cigarettes, roll your own, chewing tobacco, pipes or cigars. Quitting tobacco products reduces your risk of at least 15 types of cancer including lung cancer, which is the biggest cause of cancer death in Ireland
- For support to quit smoking go to www.quit.ie or call 1800 201 203



Second Hand Smoke

- Second hand tobacco smoke increases cancer risk
- Make your home and car smoke free



Vaccines

- Vaccinations can protect against some kinds of cancer
- HPV is a virus that can cause a range of cancers including cervical, penis, anal, mouth and throat cancer. The HPV vaccine protects against the HPV virus. The HPV vaccine is offered to all girls and boys in secondary school to reduce cancer risk
- Hepatitis B vaccine protects against liver cancer. It is offered to all newborns in Ireland

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Contact prevention@cancercontrol.ie for more information

Cancer Prevention Initiatives

World Cancer Day webinar 4th February 1:00-2:15pm

The ICPN is hosting a webinar for the public on steps to reduce your cancer risk, including

- Eating for health
- Radon
- Skin Protection
- Breastfeeding
- Know the signs, find cancer early

Register to watch live or receive the link to watch back, or share with members of the general public. To book your place click [here](#).

National Survey on Cancer Awareness and Attitudes

The HSE National Cancer Control Programme is undertaking a national survey of a random selection of the adult population living in Ireland, to assess current awareness of cancer risk factors and signs and symptoms. The purpose of the survey is to

- determine public knowledge and awareness of risk and preventive factors for cancer
- assess beliefs about cancer
- assess knowledge of early signs and symptoms of cancer
- assess health seeking behaviour, including barriers and enablers to seeking medical advice

Data collection will be conducted between January and April 2022. For more information, read the participant information leaflet by clicking on the link below

[National Survey on Cancer Awareness and Attitudes; Participant Information Sheet;](#)

Good Nutrition for Cancer Recovery and Prevention

Research has shown that involuntary weight loss and muscle wasting is very common in people undergoing cancer treatment and has a very significant impact on ability to tolerate treatment, and on quality of life and duration of survival. Nutrition is also an important factor in cancer prevention.

Breakthrough Cancer Research, together with their partners in University College Cork (UCC) have developed evidence-based cookbooks. These resources are provided at no cost to patients and are available in all cancer hospitals, as well as many support centres or via the [charity's website](#). New editions of the books tackling involuntary weight loss and swallowing difficulties are being distributed in early 2022, as well as new booklet on common nutrition and diet myths.

A new content hub will be launched in 2022. This repository will house evidence based cancer-related content which will span areas like Awareness & Prevention, Cancer Explained, Research Explained, Nutrition, Myths vs Facts etc.

National Screening Service – working to reduce inequity

In December 2021, the NSS published the report [Working to Reduce Inequity in Screening 2021](#). The report details the variety of projects we have undertaken to improve access to our services and improve the outcomes for people, who use our service. We want to ensure that every step of the screening journey, from invitation to treatment, is accessible. We are learning and listening to communities, using this information to improve people's outcomes and experiences of screening. We will continue this work in 2022, looking at what is working in our services, what improvements are needed and working collaboratively with communities to understand the lived experience of our service users, so we can better meet their needs.

For more information please contact: Lynn Swinburne, Senior Health Promotion Officer, Public Health Department, NSS. lynn.swinburne@screeningservice.ie

5K Your Way, Move Against Cancer

5K Your Way, Move Against Cancer is a community-based initiative to encourage those living with and beyond cancer, their families and friends, and those working in cancer services to walk, jog, run, cheer or volunteer at a local 5K Your Way group at designated Parkrun events on the last Saturday of every month.

Research shows that physical activity may reduce risk of cancer recurrence and prolong survival but most importantly, it's social and it's fun!

The 5K Your Way, Move Against Cancer initiative is provided by [MOVE Charity](#). Find your nearest 5k Your Way group [HERE](#).

If you would like more information, please do not hesitate to get in touch!

- Email: info@5kyourway.org
- Website: www.5kyourway.org
- Facebook: [5k your way: move against cancer](#)
- Twitter: [@cancer5kYourWay](#)
- Instagram: [@5kyourway](#)

Your Health Your Choice Challenge

The Marie Keating Foundation is running their annual Your Health, Your Choice campaign. The campaign aims to increase awareness of cancer prevention and engage people in activities to reduce their cancer risk. Learn more about the campaign by visiting <https://www.mariekeating.ie/your-health-your-choice/>



Social Inequalities and Cancer – Self-paced module

The International Agency for Research Cancer (IARC) offers self paced online education modules on Social Inequalities and Cancer. To enroll visit: <https://learning.iarc.fr/wcr/courses/social-inequalities-and-cancer-module/>

Time to Act Campaign

The European Cancer Organisation are holding the Irish launch of their ‘Time to Act’ campaign on World Cancer Day, Friday 4th February with the NCCP as a local partner. The European ‘Time to Act’ message focusses on encouraging the public to recognize and act on possible signs and symptoms of cancer, despite the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. Register to attend the virtual launch of the ‘Time to Act’ Campaign <https://www.europecancer.org/events/158:time-to-act-don-t-let-covid-19-stop-you-from-tackling-cancer-ireland.html>

Publications

- Ireland’s first National Stop Smoking Clinical Guidelines were recently launched, setting out clear guidelines on how healthcare professionals can help support people who smoke to quit smoking. These can be accessed [here](#).
- The National Cancer Registry of Ireland published the ‘Cancer in Ireland 1994-2019: Annual Report of the National Cancer Registry’ providing data on cancer incidence, mortality and survival for cancer in Ireland 1994 – 2019. The report can be accessed [here](#).
- Cancer Research UK Guide to reducing inequalities in cancer screening can be accessed [here](#).

Cancer Risk Reduction Awareness Dates for your diary

- World Cancer Day 4th February 2022
- Bowel Cancer Awareness Month March 2022
- HPV Awareness Day 4th March 2022
- No Smoking Day 9th March 2022

A continued focus on cancer prevention is essential to reduce the serious impact of cancer on the lives of thousands of people in Ireland.

The ICPN provides an avenue to collaborate and identify opportunities to work together to prevent cancer for current and future generations. We aim to support implementation of the National Cancer Strategy’s cancer prevention recommendations.

Please contact the ICPN for support with your cancer prevention ideas, initiatives or research at prevention@cancercontrol.ie