Get active to reduce your risk of getting cancer

Does physical activity reduce cancer risk?
Yes. If you are physically active, eat a good diet and are a healthy body weight, you can lower your risk of getting cancer by up to 30%.

To reduce your cancer risk, you will benefit most if you are physically active throughout your whole life and if you do moderate or vigorous exercise. The more physically active you are, the better. But it is never too late to start.

What cancers are prevented with physical activity?
Physical activity reduces your risk of getting cancer of the breast (post-menopause), large bowel (colorectum) and uterus (womb).

Being inactive increases your risk of these cancers. Inactivity also increases your chance of becoming overweight or obese, and this increases the risk of cancer too.

How does physical activity reduce cancer risk?
Physical activity can reduce the risk of getting cancer by:

- regulating hormones like oestrogen and insulin in the blood,
- increasing the movement of food though the bowel,
- reducing inflammation of the bowel.
How much physical activity will help to reduce my cancer risk?

You should try to do:

- 30 minutes of moderate physical activity on five or more days of the week; or
- 20 minutes of vigorous physical activity on three or more days of the week.

To reduce cancer risk, the more active you are the better. You don’t have to take all the exercise in one go. You can break it up to suit you during the day. You can benefit from even small amounts of moderate activity throughout the day.

Are there other benefits from physical activity?

Physical activity also helps to:

- reduce your risk of having high blood pressure;
- reduce your risk of heart disease and diabetes;
- maintain healthy bones, muscles and joints; and
- improve your energy and help you feel well.

Get Ireland Active

Visit the Get Ireland Active website for physical activity guidelines for adults and children. These guidelines are based on the latest scientific information to help reduce your risk of getting cancer. You can also find information on local events or classes. See [www.getirelandactive.ie](http://www.getirelandactive.ie)

How do I get started?

No matter what kind of activity you choose, the important thing is to find something you enjoy and get moving. It’s never too late to start being more active. Try to fit in at least 30 minutes of exercise on five or more days of the week, and look for other ways to be active throughout the day. Remember, your 30 minutes can be done by exercising for 10 minutes three times during the day.
Here are some simple ideas that might help you to get active:

- Walk or cycle to your destination and use the stairs rather than the lift.
- Exercise with your family or friends and maybe join a team or sports club.
- Take a 10 or 20 minute exercise break at work to stretch or take a short walk.
- Go dancing, or swimming or maybe take your children to the park.
- Plan active holidays with family or friends.
- Wear a pedometer every day to increase your daily steps.
- Use a stationary bicycle or treadmill while watching TV.

The differences between moderate and vigorous physical activity:

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| **Moderate intensity** | - Your heart and breathing rate increase but you are still able to carry on a conversation.  
- You are warm or sweating slightly.  
- The pace should be comfortable. | - Brisk walking (one mile in 15 – 20 minutes)  
- Swimming  
- Water aerobics  
- Cycling  
- Dancing  
- General gardening  
- Brisk hoovering  
- Tennis (doubles) |
| **Vigorous intensity** | - Your heart and breathing rate increase and you may have difficulty having a conversation.  
- You become out of breath. It will make you huff and puff. | - Jogging or running (5mph)  
- Swimming laps  
- Cycling  
- Tennis (singles)  
- Digging  
- Circuit training with weights |

Useful organisations

The HSE Health Promotion Departments can give you information in relation to physical activity and exercise in your locality. Call the HSE info line 1850 24 1850.

You will also find information in your local library on activities in your area.
Useful websites

- Get Ireland Active for a list of activities in your area: [www.getirelandactive.ie](http://www.getirelandactive.ie)
- HSE Health Promotion: [www.healthpromotion.ie](http://www.healthpromotion.ie)
- The Irish Heart Foundation (promotes Sí na Sláinte walking routes throughout the country, campaigns and information on physical activity): [www.irishheart.ie](http://www.irishheart.ie)
- The Irish Sports Council (includes a list of your Local Sports Partnerships): [www.irishsportscouncil.ie](http://www.irishsportscouncil.ie)
- Age & Opportunity (‘Go for Life’ is the national sport and physical activity programme for older people): [www.olderinireland.ie](http://www.olderinireland.ie)
- GP Exercise Referral: [www.gpexercisereferral.ie](http://www.gpexercisereferral.ie)
- The Irish Cancer Society: [www.cancer.ie](http://www.cancer.ie)