

Irish Cancer Prevention Network



An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Scaghástála
National Screening Service

Newsletter March 2021

Welcome to the Irish Cancer Prevention Network (ICPN) newsletter. This quarterly newsletter will share with you the facts behind cancer prevention messages and learning from cancer prevention initiatives. It also provides an avenue for you to link with the ICPN for support with your own cancer prevention work. We are delighted to announce that the National Screening Service has joined the ICPN and is now represented on our steering group. We hope to grow the ICPN further and continue working towards preventing cancer attributable to modifiable risk factors in Ireland.

ICPN Steps to Reduce your Cancer Risk: Facts

Each individual person's risk of getting cancer is influenced by a wide range of modifiable and non-modifiable risk factors. 'Modifiable' risk factors are things that we can change, like whether we smoke or drink alcohol, the food we choose to eat and the amount of exercise we get. 'Non-modifiable' risk factors are things that we can't change, like our age and our genetics, which significantly influence our risk of getting cancer.

Unfortunately, because of the impact of non-modifiable risk factors like age and genetics, many people will still get cancer no matter how healthy their lifestyle is. But we can all take steps to reduce our risk of cancer by making healthy lifestyle choices.

Each ICPN newsletter features information about modifiable risk factors for cancer and the steps that we can each take to reduce our risk.

Eating for Health and Cancer Risk^{1,2,3,4,5,6,7}

Eating for health can reduce our cancer risk.

A diet rich in wholegrains, vegetable, fruit and beans helps protect against bowel cancer and some cancers of the head and neck (including cancer of the lips, mouth, tongue, nose, throat, vocal cords, oesophagus and windpipe).

Eating a healthy diet also helps to ensure that we maintain a healthy weight, which in itself reduces the risk of at least 12 different cancers.

HEALTHY EATING

Enjoy food, have a healthy varied diet:

- Eat plenty of wholegrains fruit and vegetables.
- Limit high-calorie foods such as "fast foods", sugary drinks and foods high in sugar or fat.
- Avoid processed meat.
- If you eat red meat such as beef, pork and lamb, limit consumption to a moderate amount, (no more than about three portions per week).

How?

- Wholegrains are a rich source of vitamins and minerals, including vitamin E, selenium, copper, zinc, and dietary fibre. Many of these reduce the risk of cancer.
- Fruit and non-starchy vegetables contain dietary fibre and nutrients. It is likely that a combination of these nutrients lowers the risk of certain cancers.
- Red and processed meat contains haem, nitrates and nitrites. These can stimulate formation of cancer causing compounds in the body.
- Coffee may reduce cancer risk. The exact mechanism of how this happens is unknown. It has been suggested that coffee reduces cancer risk by lowering insulin and hormone levels, and by providing a source of beneficial bio active compounds for our bodies.

Eating for Health Tips

Every one extra portion of fruit or vegetables is good for you. Try adding a piece of fruit to your breakfast (e.g a chopped banana to cereal), eat some salad with your lunch (e.g add some tomato to your sandwich), and add vegetables to your stews or pasta dishes. Aim to make half your plate vegetables or salad.

Eat plenty of dietary fibre. Go for high fibre breakfast cereals and try adding some seeds to your cereal, choose wholegrain bread, have some brown rice or pasta. Add beans or lentils to casseroles or stews. Include fruit and vegetables at every meal.

Vary your protein. Protein is found in meat, beans, lentils, fish, eggs, and tofu. Keep red meat to a maximum of three portions per week. Mix up your weekly dinners with chicken, fish and meals based on beans and lentils. Avoid processed meat.

Enjoy your morning cup of coffee! It may help reduce your risk of liver and endometrial cancer.

Further information

For further information click on the links below

- [Irish Nutrition & Dietetic Institute: Eating for Health](#)
 - [National Cancer Control Programme General Cancer Prevention](#)
 - [Irish Cancer Society Healthy lifestyle: Eat a balanced diet](#)
 - [Marie Keating Foundation: Your Health Your Choice cancer prevention campaign](#)
 - [Breakthrough Cancer Research cancer information and nutrition](#)
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Cancer Prevention Awareness Days: March – May 2021

- European Bowel Cancer Awareness Month, March
- Bowel Cancer Awareness Month, April
- World Health Day, 7th April
- SunSmart Skin Cancer Prevention Month, May
- Melanoma Monday, 3rd May
- World Ovarian Cancer Day, 8th May
- European Public Health Week, 17th May
- European Week Against Cancer, 30th May
- World No Tobacco Day, 31st May

Cancer Prevention Initiatives

Healthy Ireland SunSmart

Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in Ireland, yet we can reduce our risk by protecting our skin from ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun and not using sunbeds. Through the Healthy Ireland SunSmart campaign, the Irish Skin Foundation and the ICPN collaborate to support people living in Ireland to reduce our risk of skin cancer.

In Ireland, the UV index is usually 3 or above **from April to September, even when it is cloudy**. When the UV index is 3 or above you need to protect your skin.

When you or your family are going for a walk, playing outdoors, doing other activities outdoors, or if your job means you're working outside, protect your skin by following the Healthy Ireland SunSmart "S"s.

If you or your organisation wants to adopt SunSmart initiatives, click on the resources below or contact prevention@cancercontrol.ie



- [Skin Cancer Prevention Factsheet](#)
- [Application to use the Healthy Ireland SunSmart logo](#)
- [Factsheet: Playing Outdoors Skin Protection for kids](#)
- [SunSmart Outdoor Workers Resources](#)
- For a full list of all Healthy Ireland SunSmart resources for your use [click here](#)

Bowel Cancer Awareness Month, April

April is bowel cancer awareness month. We know you can reduce your risk of bowel cancer through the food we eat. Additionally taking part in BowelScreen, the National Bowel Screening Programme can reduce risk and detect cancer early in those with no symptoms.



BowelScreen is for men and women aged 60-69 years and the test is offered every 2 years. Screening involves taking a sample of stool (poo) at home using a home test that will be sent to you in the post. This test looks for blood in the stool.

BowelScreen is free. Register on Freephone 1800 45 45 55 or click here to [register for bowel](#) online. If you haven't received an invitation for bowel screening call Freephone 1800 45 45 55 to check if you're on the register, or to add your details.

Screening is used to detect cancer early, before any symptoms appear. If you have any potential signs or symptoms of cancer, such as a persistent change in your bowel habit, blood in your poo or unexplained weight loss, you should seek advice from your GP without delay. Don't wait until your next screening test.

Cancer Prevention Learning

- The European Union published "[Europe's Beating Cancer Plan](#)" with the aim of supporting, coordinating and complementing Member States' efforts to reduce the suffering caused by cancer. The plan has a strong focus on cancer prevention, including working towards a tobacco free generation, reducing harmful alcohol consumption, reducing exposure to cancer causing substances and improving health literacy to promote healthier lifestyles. Read more [here](#).
- On World Cancer Day (February 4th 2020) the ICPN collaborated with the Irish Nutrition & Dietetic Institute to deliver a 40 minute public webinar on "Food for thought. Eating for Health to Reduce Cancer Risk". If you missed it or want to catch up you can view it by [clicking here](#).
- Read research published in the Irish Medical Journal on "[Cancer Incidence and Mortality Due to Inadequate Physical Activity](#)".
- Register for Cancer Prevention Europe 2021 Symposium on the 16th April [here](#)

It is essential that we continue to strengthen work in cancer prevention 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

References

1. Wild, C., Weiderpass, E. and Stewart, B., 2020. World Cancer Report: Cancer Research For Cancer Prevention. Lyon, France: International Agency for Research on Cancer.
 2. Key, T., Bradbury, K., Perez-Cornago, A., Sinha, R., Tsilidis, K., & Tsugane, S. (2020). Diet, nutrition, and cancer risk: what do we know and what is the way forward?. *BMJ*, 368(m511). Retrieved 19 January 2021.
 3. World Cancer Research Fund/American Institute for Cancer Research, 2018. Wholegrains, vegetables and fruit and the risk of cancer. Continuous Update Project Expert Report.
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