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**HEALTH & SAFETY
NEWSLETTER**

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November 2020

Is cancer linked to your diet?

By the time we reach our 85th birthday, one in two of us will have been diagnosed with cancer. Cancer is a leading cause of death worldwide, accounting for an estimated 9.6 million deaths in 2018. The statistics may make grim reading, but the fact is that the choices we make in life – including what we eat – can prevent at least one in three cancers.

Thanks to the success of public health messages, we know about the dangers of smoking and excess sun exposure and how they increase our risk of lung and skin cancer. But what you put on your plate should be on that list too, as cancer experts become more aware of the important role diet plays in cancer.

Some foods have hit the headlines because of their anti-cancer properties – among the better-known ones are broccoli, cauliflower and other cruciferous vegetables. Healthy as these foods are, it's unlikely that there are 'magic bullet' specific foods or nutrients that in themselves cause or protect against cancer, says Dr Kate Allen, World Cancer Research Fund (WCRF) International's Executive Director of Science & Public Affairs.

"Rather, different patterns of diet and physical activity combine to create a metabolic state that makes you more or less susceptible to cancer," she says.

In 2018 the WCRF published the landmark report *Diet, Nutrition, Physical Activity and Cancer: a Global Perspective*, the result of an ongoing review of decades of evidence by independent experts from across the globe.

According to Dr Allen, these are the key messages we need to take from that report.

1. Avoid the gradual weight gain through healthy eating and exercise.

There are at least 12 cancers linked to excess weight, including liver, breast, prostate and kidney cancer.

2. Eat a diet rich in vegetables, fruit, wholegrains and beans. The dietary patterns consistently linked to lower rates of cancer are high in these foods, says Dr Allen.

3. Limit consumption of 'fast foods', red and processed meat, sugar-sweetened drinks and alcohol. Fast food and sugar-sweetened drinks fuel overweight and obesity, red and processed meats are linked with colorectal cancer and alcohol is a cause of six different types of cancer.

4. Do not rely on supplements for cancer prevention. Aim instead to get everything you need from your diet, advises Dr Allen. ✕



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November is the month for Movember. This annual event invites men to grow moustaches to raise awareness of men's health issues, such as prostate cancer, testicular cancer, and men's mental health. Find out how you can take part and donate at [movember.com/](https://www.movember.com/)

Get Checking!

Whether you're 20, 40 or 60, male or female, you need regular health checks. These can pick up early signs of disease or illness and give you the opportunity to talk with your doctor or other health professional about any concerns you have.

Note: Depending on your location, the recommended ages and frequencies for screening may differ slightly to those noted below. Some of these health checks may also be free or subsidised as part of government health programs. Check with your doctor as to the recommended screening ages and frequencies in your area.

Regardless of your location however, you should consider conducting all of these health checks on a regular basis.

When was the last time you visited your doctor, got your vision checked or saw your dentist? We lead busy lives and it's easy to put these visits off if there's nothing troubling you, but regular health checks – even when you're young and fit – can detect early signs of disease and may even save your life.

Depending on your age, everyone should consider the following checks:

Skin

When? Regularly, whatever your age. Check your skin for unusual moles or freckles, looking for changes in colour, size or shape of any spots, as these may indicate skin cancer. But also make sure your doctor gives you a full skin examination as there are parts of your body, such as your scalp and back, that are hard for you to check. Your doctor can then tell you how often you need a skin examination. People at higher risk (such as outdoor workers and those with fair skin or a lot of moles) should have a yearly examination.

Sexual health

When? About once a year if you're sexually active, more often depending on your lifestyle

and sexual activity. Some sexually transmitted infections can lead to long-term health problems, including infertility, if not treated properly. You can get a sexual health check at your doctor, family planning or sexual health clinic.

Obesity

When? Every two years get your Body Mass Index (BMI) and your waist circumference measured; every 12 months if you're over 40 or at high risk for health conditions including cardiovascular disease and diabetes. You can conduct this check yourself and discuss the results with your doctor.

Dental health

When? See your dentist at least once a year or as recommended. Your dentist can spot early signs of gum disease and oral cancer and give your teeth a professional clean.

Eyesight

When? Visit your optometrist every two years, or more frequently if you have diabetes, high blood pressure or a diagnosed eye condition such as short-sightedness, glaucoma or macular degeneration.

Blood pressure

When? Every two years from the age of 18, or every year if you're over 40, your blood pressure is high, or you have a family history of cardiovascular disease. High blood pressure, a major risk factor for heart disease, stroke and kidney disease, has no symptoms, which means you won't know you have it until you're tested.

Blood glucose

When? Every three years from age 40. Blood glucose (or blood sugar) tests are used to check for or monitor diabetes. The World Health Organization estimates that over 425 million people worldwide have type 2 diabetes, with up to 50 per cent of those not realising they have the condition. Your risk increases if you're over 40, are overweight, have a family history of type 2 diabetes or have other risk factors.

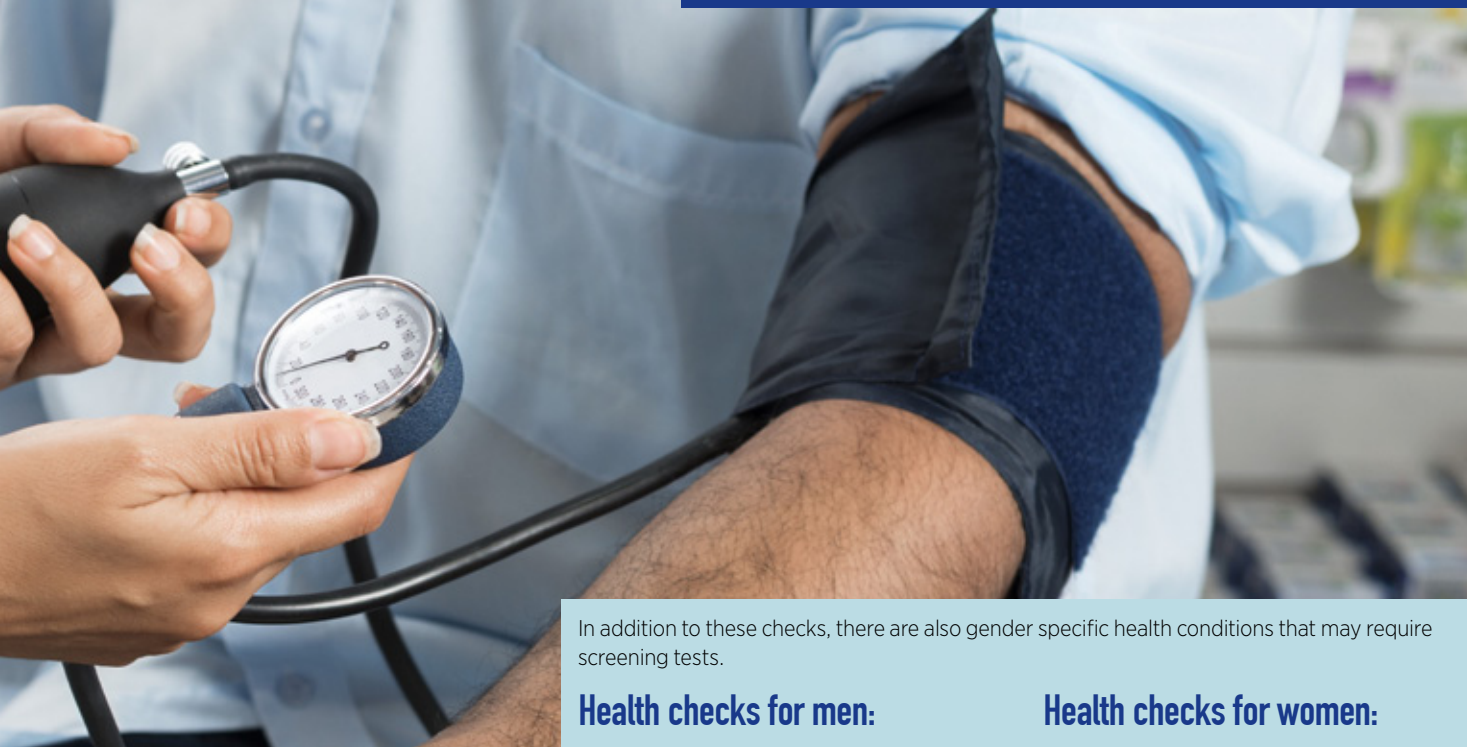
Heart health check

When? At least every two years once you're over 45 (35 for some ethnic groups). Your doctor does a heart health check to gather

Your health risk tool

Find out if you're at risk of developing heart disease, type 2 diabetes or kidney disease with this 5-minute health questionnaire.

Visit <https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/risk-checker/heart-kidney-diabetes>



information about your risk factors for cardiovascular disease including blood pressure, BMI, cholesterol, triglycerides, blood glucose, smoking status and lifestyle factors.

Bowel cancer

When? Every two years once you're over 50. You can do this test at home using a kit provided by your doctor (it's also available at pharmacies). The test checks a bowel motion sample for traces of blood, which may be a sign of bowel cancer. Bowel cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death, but up to 90 per cent of cases can be successfully treated if detected early. Some places have government programs providing free screening.

Osteoporosis

When? A bone density test is recommended for women and men over 50 if they have particular risk factors for osteoporosis, which your doctor will discuss with you. Even though osteoporosis (weak, brittle bones) is more common in women, it can also affect men. A bone density scan will tell your doctor if any action is needed to improve your bone health.

In addition to these checks, there are also gender specific health conditions that may require screening tests.

Health checks for men:

Testicular cancer

When? From puberty onwards, men should check their testicles regularly for unusual thickening or lumps, and see their doctor if concerned. Testicular cancer is a condition where abnormal cells in the testicle grow, divide and multiply creating a growth or tumour, and is most common in men aged between 20 and 40.

Prostate cancer

When? Experts don't actually recommend routine prostate cancer screening, even though it's the most common cancer in men. If you're aged between 50 and 69, healthy, and don't have a family history of prostate cancer, it's best to discuss with your doctor the pros and cons of having a prostate specific antigen (PSA) test or digital rectal examination (DRE) for prostate cancer. If you have a family history of any type of cancer, including prostate cancer, you may need to have a PSA or DRE regularly after you turn 40.

For more information about men's health conditions, including testicular and prostate cancer, visit healthymale.org.au

Health checks for women:

Cervical cancer

When? Every five years, for women aged between 25 and 74 years. The cervical screening test (which replaced the Pap test) detects HPV (human papillomavirus) infection. This is a key risk factor in the development of cervical cancer, one of the most preventable cancers. Even if you are vaccinated against HPV you need to participate in regular cervical screening.

Breast cancer

When? All women should check their breasts for any lumps or changes that may indicate breast cancer (visit bcna.org.au/breast-health-awareness/breast-awareness/ for more information).

It's recommended that women aged between 50 and 74 should schedule a mammogram every two to three years to screen for breast cancer. In some locations this is a service provided by the government. If you're younger than this, talk to your doctor to help you decide if and how often you need to be screened.



We all procrastinate. We do less urgent tasks in preference to the more urgent ones, or pleasurable jobs in place of less pleasurable ones. But for some of us procrastination can stop us performing well at work, or might even make us delay seeking medical treatment.

There are many reasons people put off doing tasks. Some are just too overwhelming, complex or boring (such as your tax return), while we avoid others because we're distracted or fatigued, or we fear we won't do them well.

Procrastination isn't a character flaw, laziness or poor time management, argue some psychologists, but rather it's a way of coping with challenging emotions and negative moods induced by certain tasks. By putting off the task, we get rid of the bad feeling, whether it's anxiety, fear, boredom, frustration, or self-doubt.

"Procrastination is an emotion regulation problem, not a time management

problem," said Dr Tim Pynchyl, professor of psychology and member of the Procrastination Research Group at Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada.

Unfortunately putting off the task only makes the negative associations we have with it worse, which contributes to further procrastination. It can also generate worry, guilt and stress which along with affecting your productivity, may also impact your mental health.

So what can you do if you think you might be a habitual procrastinator?

Forgive yourself.

Research suggests this one of the most effective things that you can do. In a study by Dr Pynchyl and his colleagues, students who reported forgiving themselves for procrastinating on studying for a first exam ended up procrastinating less for a second exam. This works because procrastination is linked to negative feelings, the researchers say. Forgiving yourself can reduce the guilt you feel about procrastinating, which is one of the

main triggers for procrastinating in the first place.

Don't wait until you are in the right mood.

One of the most important things, advises Dr Pynchyl, is to recognize that you don't have to be in the mood to do a certain task.

"Most of us seem to tacitly believe that our emotional state has to match the task at hand," says Pynchyl. But that's just not true. Recognise that you're rarely going to feel like it, he advises, and that it doesn't matter if you don't feel like it.

Start with one small step.

Even if it's a tiny action such as working for 10 to 15 minutes on a task, a little progress will make you feel better about the job ahead and increase your self-esteem, which in turn reduces your need to procrastinate to make yourself feel better.

"We can't deny our feelings, but we can pay less attention to them ... and our research has shown that getting started is key," says Dr Pynchyl. ✕



3 ways to boost your memory

Frustrated that your once excellent memory seems to be failing you? Perhaps you're studying and struggling to learn new facts, often forget where you've left your keys or phone, or people's names escape you. Here are three ways to help improve your memory.

1. Get moving. We know that regular exercise has numerous benefits. Now we can add brain function, including memory, to that list. In an analysis of previous studies, University of Canberra researchers found that aerobic exercise improved cognitive abilities in the over 50s, such as thinking, reading, learning and reasoning, while strength training improved memory.

Study author Joe Northey believed the findings were convincing enough to enable both types of exercise to be prescribed to improve brain health in the over 50s.

New research has even found that memory improves immediately after a short, single bout of exercise, although the benefit is only temporary.

2. Tweak your diet. What you eat affects how well your brain functions – just as it affects every other organ in your body. The MIND diet is an approach with the goal of

reducing dementia and age-related decline in brain health. Like the Mediterranean diet, it focuses on vegetables and wholefoods, but also singles out specific brain-healthy food groups. These include green leafy vegetables – such as spinach, rocket, kale, and silverbeet; all berries (especially blueberries); and oily fish high in omega-3 fats known to help control inflammation in the brain.

What you don't eat is just as important. The hippocampus is a part of your brain that's key to your memory. Studies show that diets high in junk and processed foods (think lots of sugar, saturated fat and refined carbohydrates) appear to shrink the hippocampus, while healthy diets are associated with larger hippocampal volume.

3. Do nothing. When trying to memorise new material, most of us assume that the more work we put into it, the better

we will perform. But we'd be better off taking breaks and literally doing nothing, say researchers. Just sit back and enjoy 10 to 15 minutes of quiet contemplation immediately after reading the material, and your memory of the facts you've just learnt will be far better than if you'd attempted to use that time more productively. The emphasis here is on doing nothing – no running errands, checking emails or surfing the web – as this gives your brain a chance for a complete recharge.

While the exact method is still unknown, we know that once memories are initially encoded, they pass through a period of consolidation that cements them in long-term storage. It was previously believed that this happened primarily during sleep, but research has since found that similar brain activity occurs during periods of wakeful rest, too. ✕

Stay safe around electricity

You flick the switch for your toast at breakfast, mid-morning coffee, and to print those important documents, taking the convenience of electrical equipment for granted. Yet the electricity in regular businesses and homes has enough power to cause injury or death by electrocution.

Humans conduct electricity very well. This means that electricity can easily pass through our bodies, causing injuries that can include cardiac arrest, burns and muscle, nerve and tissue damage.

Of course, some industries and workers are at higher risk of electrical injury with the risk of injury strongly linked to where and how electricity is used, says Safe Work Australia. The risks are generally higher if electrical equipment is used in situations that expose the equipment to moisture, heat, vibration, mechanical damage, corrosive chemicals and dust.

Inspect, test and tag.

Inspecting and testing of electrical equipment can save lives by identifying faults. Many electrical defects, such as damaged cords, can be detected just by examining them, but regular inspection by a licensed person can pick up electrical faults and deterioration you can't see. Specified electrical equipment and safety switches need to be tested at regular intervals according to the type of work they are used for.

What are some general safety tips for working with or near electricity?

- Water and electricity don't mix. Ensure your hands are dry before touching appliances or switches, don't touch electrical appliances if you are near water, and never use or leave electrical appliances where they can fall into water.
- Always turn off the appliance before removing the plug from a power point, and hold the plug, not the cord.
- Tape extension cords to walls or floors when necessary, or use a cover to prevent crushing or other damage in pedestrian and vehicle areas.
- Avoid over-loading power points. Use only one double adaptor per power point.
- Be aware that unusually warm or hot outlets or cords may be a sign that there is unsafe wiring. Unplug any cords or extension cords from these outlets and don't use them until a qualified electrician has checked the wiring. ✕



Ask an expert about ...

Q Is a sunscreen that's SPF 50 much better than SPF 30?

SPF stands for sun protection factor, says Terry Slevin, Education and Research Director, Cancer Council WA. It's the measure of how much damaging UV (ultraviolet radiation) gets through the sunscreen. The higher the number, the less UV passes through.

The difference between SPF 30 and SPF 50 sounds like a lot, but is in fact quite small.

An SPF of 30 allows one-thirtieth or 3.3 per cent of UV to reach your skin. This means it filters 96.7 per cent of UV.

An SPF of 50 filters 98 per cent, with one fiftieth, or 2 per cent getting through.

Put another way, if your unprotected skin would take ten minutes to show signs of burning, then properly applying SPF 30 sunscreen would slow the rate of burning

to the point where it would take 30 times longer, or 300 minutes in total. SPF 15 would take 150 minutes, while SPF 50, 500 minutes.

But these numbers are theoretical. If you extend your stay in the sun for 500 minutes (over eight hours) relying only on sunscreen you will very likely still burn!

App of the month

UVMate

Exposure to UV radiation can damage your skin in as little as 15 minutes when the UV is high (hint, it's not just in summer), and can ultimately lead to skin cancer. This app lets you know the times in the day when you do and don't need sun protection, making it easier than ever to be smart about your sun exposure all year. It also includes a range of other advice from sunrise and sunset times at your location to the local temperature to a reminder to reapply sunscreen.

Available free on the [App Store](#) and [Google Play](#).

Night owls move less

If you've been working from home this year and are enjoying the opportunity to get up later than usual, that may be because you're a night owl. But there might be a downside to those later morning starts. According to a study from Finland, people whose natural tendency is to go to bed later and wake up later tend to move around far less throughout the day.

The study tracked the daily movements of nearly 6000 early risers (morning types) and those who like to start their day a bit later (evening types). It found that morning types – those who got up earlier and went to bed earlier – moved significantly more than the evening types, even when people's health, profession and other factors were taken into account. Little of this extra activity was formal exercise, the scientists calculated, but it added up. For early rising men, the difference amounted to about 30 minutes more of walking each day, and for women, about 20 minutes more than among evening types.

The researchers believe their study shows that evening types may benefit from monitoring how frequently they move. ✕



News Bites



Should I get my gut microbes tested?

The idea that your gut microbiome – the microbes that live in your intestines – influences your health is fast gaining momentum. Many people hand over hundreds of dollars to have their gut microbiome analysed, hoping to then tweak their diets to create a 'designer microbiome' that will improve their health. But the science is still in its infancy, warn researchers from Deakin University's Food and Mood Centre.

One day we hope to be able to analyse our gut microbiome for diagnosis and treatment of disease, they say, but at the moment, although the research is promising, learning what bacteria live in our gut is mostly a curiosity. There's also much we don't know about the microbiome itself, with scientists being unable to agree what a healthy microbiome looks like or how the different bacteria might interact. ✕

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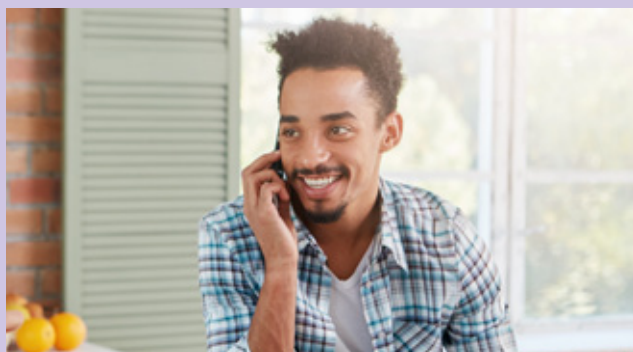


Water and alcohol never mix

Think water safety and you probably think supervised beaches and swimming between the flags. Which is sensible advice. But according to Royal Life Saving Australia, you should add 'avoid alcohol' to the list. Alcohol contributes to at least 20 per cent of all adult drowning deaths every year, a figure that rises to 41 per cent in the 15 to 29 years age group. Combining alcohol with swimming is dangerous because alcohol impairs your judgement, leads to greater risk-taking behaviour, reduces your coordination and impairs your reaction time. If you want to combine alcohol with aquatic activities, make sure you drink after you've been in the water, not before.

1

THING YOU CAN DO TODAY



Check in with a family member or friend

The stress of uncertainty, isolation and financial worries during the COVID-19 pandemic has taken its toll on the most resilient of us. While not everyone who is stressed has a mental health problem, if you're concerned about a friend or family member, check in with them, either in person or by phone. Maybe they seem out of sorts, more agitated or withdrawn, or just not themselves.

Uncertain what to say? Here are a few guidelines from ruok.org.au.

1. If you're worried about someone, start by asking "Are you OK?"
2. If they reply they aren't OK, you can dig a bit deeper. You can say: "What's been happening?" "Have you been feeling this way for a while?" or "I'm ready to listen if you want to talk."
3. They may say they're fine, but if your gut says they're not you can continue with: "It's just that you don't seem to be your usual self lately," "I'm always here if you want to chat," or "Is there someone else you'd rather talk to?"
4. Listen with an open mind. Don't interrupt, rush the conversation or judge their experience. And be comfortable with any silence.
5. Encourage action and offer support: "How can I help?" "What would take the pressure off?" "Have you thought about talking to your doctor?"
6. Make time to check in: "Let's chat again next week." ✕

EAT SMARTER

Tofu

If there's one dietary trend that's not going away soon it's plant-based eating. Eat less meat and more plants, we're told, to reduce your risk of disease and lower your carbon footprint.

For anyone looking for a meat alternative, tofu ticks many boxes. This popular food is derived from soy beans and is a versatile ingredient used in Thai, Chinese and Japanese cooking. Here's why it's worth adding to your diet.

Protein plus. Like other beans and lentils, tofu is high in protein. What makes soy (and tofu) stand out is that soy is one of the few plant foods that contains all nine essential amino acids (the building blocks of protein). The protein in soy is also useful for lowering levels of LDL or 'bad' cholesterol.

Calcium rich. Soy naturally contains calcium, although not a significant amount. But some brands of tofu use calcium as a firming agent, which means they become a far richer source of calcium. Read the labels and choose tofu that has calcium sulphate (additive number 516) included as an ingredient.

Potential menopause relief. It's thought soy products like tofu can reduce some of the unpleasant symptoms of menopause, such as hot flushes. Soy contains phytoestrogens, which appear to act like a mild form of hormone replacement therapy, and it's estimated about one in three women may get symptom relief from soy foods. Why only one in three? Because not all women have the particular gut bacteria that is crucial for turning phytoestrogens into a form that the body can use. ✕



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