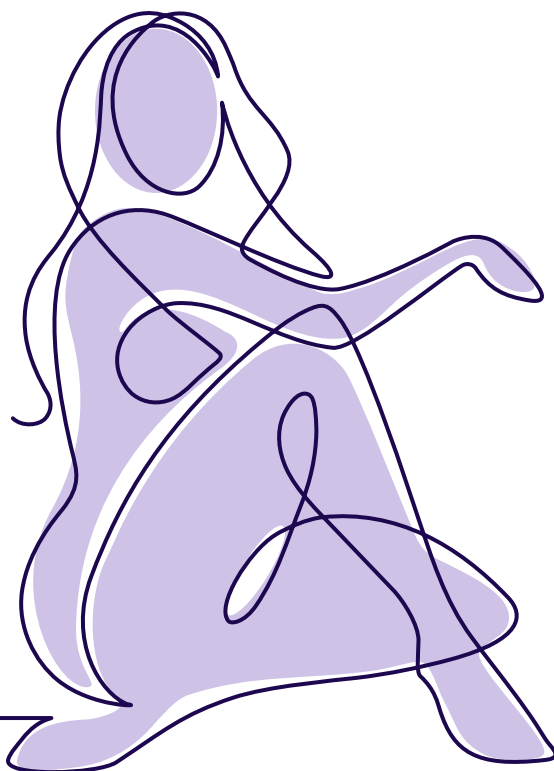


WOMEN'S HEALTH GUIDE



DEAR READER,

Thank you for picking up this copy of World Cancer Research Fund's Women's Health Guide.

Today's busy lifestyles mean that our own health can sometimes slip from the priority list. Women especially are renowned for putting others first, and when it comes to cancer, it is easy to see why it is not seen as an immediate concern.

It is often thought that cancer is caused by bad luck or is due to our genes, but only 5–10% of cancers are down to genes.

The really positive news is that there are things we can do to help protect ourselves against cancer. In fact, if we all lived a healthier lifestyle, which includes not smoking, eating a healthy diet, being physically active, maintaining a healthy weight and staying safe in the sun, around 40% of cancer cases could be prevented.

If like me, you have a busy lifestyle, you could start to see and feel the benefits to your health as well as making cancer less likely in the future by making one or two changes at a time.

This booklet was produced to provide you with information about some of the cancers we women are most at risk of and offer practical advice to enable you to be healthier and lower your risk of cancer. If you want to make changes for the good of your health, this booklet is a great place to start.

Please help to spread our Cancer Prevention Recommendations by sharing it with your family and friends.

Best wishes,

Dr Kate Allen

Science and Policy Advisor
World Cancer Research Fund



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COMMON CANCERS IN WOMEN

In the UK, around 187,430 women are diagnosed with cancer every year. The positive message is that you can protect yourself by knowing how to lower your risk and recognise the early signs of cancer.



BREAST CANCER

Breast cancer is the most common type of cancer in women in the UK, with around 56,600 new cases every year.

Possible symptoms:

- A lump or swelling in your breast, upper chest or armpit.
- A change to the skin, such as wrinkling or dimpling.
- A red or inflamed breast.
- A change in the way your nipple looks, such as if it sinks into your breast.
- A rash or crusting around your nipple.
- Unusual liquid (discharge) from either nipple.
- Changes in size or shape of one or both breasts.

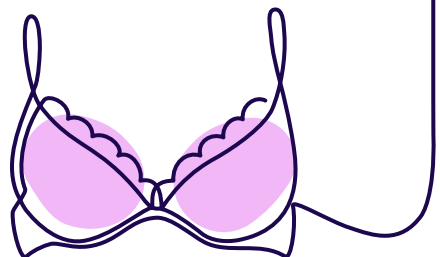
Lifestyle risk factors:

- Living with overweight or obesity.
- Drinking alcohol.
- Not doing enough physical activity.

Other factors that can increase risk include taking oestrogen-only hormone replacement therapy (HRT).



The NHS Breast Screening Programme provides free screening for all women in the UK aged 50 and over. Find out more at: [nhs.uk/conditions/breast-screening-mammogram](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/breast-screening-mammogram)



LUNG CANCER

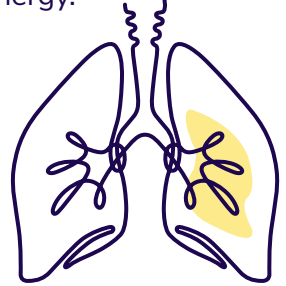
Around 23,600 new cases in women in the UK every year.

Possible symptoms:

- A persistent cough for more than three weeks.
- A chest infection that keeps coming back.
- Persistent breathlessness, tiredness or lack of energy.
- Coughing up blood.
- A pain when breathing or coughing.
- Loss of appetite or unintentional weight loss.

Lifestyle risk factors:

- Tobacco use causes over 80% of lung cancer cases, which means avoiding, cutting down or quitting smoking is the best way to lower your risk.
- Taking high-dose beta-carotene supplements can also increase lung cancer risk in both smokers and ex-smokers.



SKIN CANCER (MELANOMA)

Around 8,750 new cases in women in the UK every year.

Possible symptoms:

- A new mole, or a change in the shape, size and colour to a darker shade of an existing mole.
- Moles that are swollen, sore, bleeding, itchy or crusty.

Lifestyle risk factors:

- Too much sun exposure or sunbed use.



For early detection, get any changes to your skin or moles checked by your doctor.



BOWEL CANCER

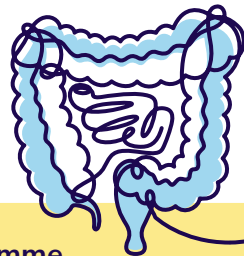
Around 20,760 new cases in women in the UK every year.

Possible symptoms:

- Blood in your poo.
- Changes in your bowel habits, particularly more frequent or runnier poo.
- Pain in your lower tummy, bloating or discomfort from eating.

Lifestyle risk factors:

- Eating processed meat and too much red meat.
- Not eating enough foods containing fibre including wholegrains.
- Living with overweight or obesity.
- Not doing enough physical activity.
- Drinking alcohol.
- Smoking tobacco.



The NHS Bowel Cancer Screening Programme provides free screening for all women aged:

- 60 and 74 years old in England (expanding to 50 years and over before 2026)
- 50 and 74 years old in Scotland
- 55 and 74 years old in Wales
- 60 and 74 years old in Northern Ireland

Find out more: nhs.uk/conditions/bowel-cancer-screening

Find out more about lowering your risk in our Protect yourself against bowel cancer leaflet: wcrf-uk.org/bowelcancer



WOMB (UTERUS) CANCER

Around 10,020 new cases in women in the UK every year.

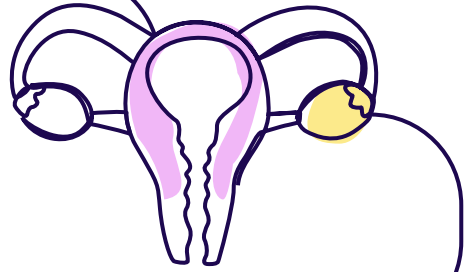
Possible symptoms:

- Vaginal bleeding after the menopause.
- Unusual heavy bleeding during or between periods.
- A bloody or pink and watery vaginal discharge.
- A lump or swelling in your tummy or between your hip bones (pelvis).
- Pain in your lower back or between your hip bones (pelvis).
- Pain during sex.
- Blood in your pee.

Lifestyle risk factors:

- Living with overweight or obesity.
- Carrying too much fat around your waist.
- Not doing enough physical activity.

Other factors that can increase risk include taking oestrogen-only hormone replacement therapy (HRT).



OVARIAN CANCER

Around 6,970 new cases in women in the UK every year.

Possible symptoms:

- Persistent bloating.
- Loss of appetite or feeling full quickly after eating.
- Pain in your tummy or between your hip bones (pelvis).
- Needing to pee urgently or more frequently than usual.
- Vaginal bleeding after the menopause.
- Changes in your bowel habits (diarrhoea or constipation).
- Unintentional weight loss.
- Fatigue.

Lifestyle risk factors:

- Living with overweight or obesity.
- Smoking tobacco.

TAKE ACTION FOR YOUR HEALTH

It is often thought that cancer is caused by bad luck or is due to our genes, but scientific evidence shows that around 40% of cancer cases could be prevented by:



- Maintaining a healthy weight
- Eating more food containing fibre including wholegrains, vegetables, fruit and pulses like beans, chickpeas and lentils
- Limiting red meat and avoiding processed meat, like bacon and ham
- Limiting overly-processed food like crisps, chocolate, biscuits, and fried food
- Limiting sugar-sweetened drinks like cola
- Limiting alcohol
- Keeping active
- Avoiding smoking
- Being safe in the sun



You may be doing some of the points above already – but for others, making one or two changes at a time could make a difference to your health and your cancer risk.

Take the quiz on the next page to see how healthy you are right now and what changes you could make to help you towards a healthier future.



Try our 5-minute Cancer Health Check:
wcrf-uk.org/cancerhealthcheck



HOW HEALTHY ARE YOU?

1 Are you a healthy weight?

A) Yes, I am a healthy weight

B) I am unsure

C) No, I need to lose weight

2 In total, how much physical activity do you do a week?

(any activity that raises your heart rate and makes you breathe more deeply counts, such as brisk walking)

A) 150 minutes or more a week

B) 90–149 minutes a week

C) Less than 90 minutes a week

3 How many portions of vegetables and fruit do you eat a day?

(80g, or a large handful is 1 portion)

A) 5 or more

B) 3–4

C) 2 or fewer

4 How often do you eat overly-processed food (sometimes called ultra-processed food) like chocolate, crisps, biscuits and fried food?

A) I don't eat overly-processed food

B) 1–2 times a week

C) More than 3 times a week

5 When you have bread, pasta or rice, do you tend to eat:

A) Mostly brown or wholegrain

B) Vary between brown and white

C) Mostly white

6 When you're thirsty, what do you like to drink?

A) Water, sugar-free soft drinks or unsweetened tea or coffee

B) Vary between A and C

C) Sugary drinks like cola, energy drinks, fruit juice, tea or coffee with added sugar

7 How much alcohol do you drink? (half a pint of lager or a single measure of spirits is 1 unit. A small glass (125ml) of wine has 1.5 units)

A) I don't drink alcohol; or only 1 or 2 units on special occasions

B) Up to 14 units a week

C) More than 14 units a week

8 How often do you eat red meat (beef, pork, lamb, goat)?

A) I don't eat red meat; or up to 3 times a week

B) 4–5 times a week

C) Every day

9 How often do you eat processed meat? (bacon, ham, chorizo)

A) I don't eat processed meat

B) 1–2 times a week

C) More than 3 times a week

10 Do you smoke tobacco?

A) No, or I used to but have given up

B) Yes, but I am trying to give up

C) Yes

HOW DID YOU SCORE?

Mostly As

You seem to have a lot of healthy habits already. Keep reading for more tips to maintain your health.

Mostly Bs

You are on the right track, but there is room for improvement. Keep reading to see what else you can do to be a bit healthier and to help protect yourself against cancer.

Mostly Cs

Your health could benefit if you made some healthy changes. Even making one or two changes could make a difference to your health which means you are less likely to develop cancer. Keep reading to get started.

MAINTAINING A HEALTHY WEIGHT

Did you know that maintaining a healthy weight is one of the most important ways to lower your risk of cancer?

But around 3 in 5 women in the UK are living with overweight or obesity.

We have strong scientific evidence that maintaining a healthy weight can lower your risk of at least 13 different types of cancer, including ones that are common in women like ovarian and postmenopausal breast cancer. Maintaining a healthy weight can also lower your risk of type 2 diabetes and heart disease.



ARE YOU A HEALTHY WEIGHT?

To find out if you are a healthy weight, you can use measurements including your Body Mass Index (BMI) and waist measurement.

Your BMI

Measuring your BMI is a simple way to find out if you are a healthy weight for your height. To work out your BMI:

- 1 Measure your height, in metres.
- 2 Weigh yourself, in kilograms.
- 3 Divide your weight by your height. And then divide your answer by your height again to work out your BMI.

Or use our online BMI calculator:
wcrf-uk.org/bmi-calculator



Have a look at the table below to see if you are a healthy weight, based on your BMI:

White European origin	South Asian, Chinese, other Asian, Middle Eastern, Black African or African-Caribbean origin	Category*
Less than 18.5	Less than 18.5	Underweight
18.5–24.9	18.5–22.9	Healthy weight
25–29.9	23–27.4	Overweight
30 or more	27.5 and over	Obese

* For some people, using BMI might not be accurate, such as women who are pregnant, older people, athletes, people with a high amount of muscle and women below 1.5m/ 5ft tall.



If your BMI is below 18.5, this puts you in the underweight range which is not good for your health either. Please speak to your doctor for help and advice.

Waist measurement

Measuring your waist is a simple way to find out if you have too much fat around your waist, even if you are a healthy BMI.

To measure your waist:

- 1 Wrap a measuring tape around your waist, at the halfway point between the bottom of your lowest rib and the top of your hip bone. If you have trouble finding this point, then lean to one side and see where the skin folds.
- 2 Make sure it is level and a snug fit, but not digging into your skin.
- 3 Breathe normally, and measure after you have breathed out.



A healthy waist measurement for all women is less than 80cm (31.5 inches)

ACHIEVING A HEALTHY WEIGHT

Maintaining a healthy weight is about balancing the energy (calories) you get from what you eat and drink, and the energy your body uses when being active. Over time, you can gain weight if you eat and drink more energy than your body uses. Whereas you can lose weight if your body uses more energy than you eat and drink.

An average adult woman needs around 2,000 calories a day.

We know that losing weight can be challenging, and probably unsurprisingly, many of us have tried losing weight at some point.

It is important to set a realistic and healthy weight loss goal such as aiming to lose around 0.2 to 0.9 kg (0.5 to 2 pounds) per week. Once you reach your weight loss goal, it is just as important to maintain a healthy weight by eating well and keeping active.

EATING WELL






A healthy, balanced diet means enjoying a variety of foods from all food groups to ensure you are getting all the nutrients you need to keep healthy. Making healthy changes to your diet can support your overall health, including lowering your cancer risk.



GETTING YOUR 5 A DAY

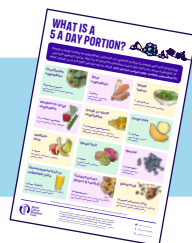
It is recommended that you eat at least five different coloured fruit and vegetables every day. They are a good source of fibre, a type of carbohydrate that helps keep your gut healthy, and eating a variety of colours ensures you get a variety of vitamins and minerals to help keep you healthy.

What counts towards your 5 A DAY?

Food type	Example 5 A DAY portion size
<p>Vegetables*</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 whole carrot, sweet potato, parsnip • 4 tablespoons cooked pak choi, spinach, okra, squash • 8 florets or pieces broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower
<p>Fruit</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 medium apple, banana, orange • 1–2 handfuls blueberries, pomegranate seeds • 1 slice papaya, melon, pineapple • 1 tablespoon dates, dried cranberries, raisins
<p>Pulses only counts as maximum one of your 5 A DAY, no matter how much you eat</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 tablespoons cooked lentils, chickpeas, black beans  • ½ tin of reduced salt and sugar baked beans 
<p>Fruit or vegetable juice with no added sugar only counts as a maximum of one of your 5 A DAY</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 150ml glass fruit or vegetable juice with no added sugar 

* Even though potatoes, yams, cassava and plantains are vegetables, they don't count towards your 5 A DAY

Find out more in our 5 A DAY portion poster:
wcrf-uk.org/5ADAY



Practical ways get your 5 A DAY

- **Fill 1/3 of your plate with vegetables, fruit and pulses**
Around 1/3 of your plate should be filled with vegetables, fruit and pulses (like beans, chickpeas and lentils). Building your plate around these types of food is a great first step to eating well.
- **Keep a stock of canned or frozen fruit and vegetables**
Having these options on hand at home makes sure that you always have healthy options available. They can be just as good for you as fresh produce, and budget-friendly too.
- **Bulk up your meals with vegetables and pulses**
When cooking soups, curries, stews or sauces from scratch, bulk it up with some vegetables like sweet potato, spinach, peas and sweetcorn, and pulses like chickpeas or lentils. It is a great way to make your meals more filling and nutritious. Keep the skin on vegetables and potatoes to get more fibre.
- **Snack on fresh fruit, dried fruit or vegetable sticks**
Keep a small container with you that is filled with fresh fruit, dried fruit or vegetable sticks for tasty and healthy snacks throughout your day.
- **Boost your breakfast**
Add chopped bananas, berries or dried fruit over your cereal, porridge or yoghurt. You can also add a handful of spinach to your favourite smoothie for an extra portion of vegetables.
- **Eat a rainbow**
Aim to eat a variety of colourful fruits and vegetables, as they come packed with various vitamins and minerals. Choose seasonal and locally grown produce whenever possible, as they can be delicious and budget-friendly.



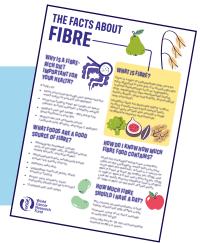
EAT MORE FOODS CONTAINING FIBRE INCLUDING WHOLEGRAINS

Fibre is a type of carbohydrate found in a variety of plant foods including vegetables, fruit, wholegrains, pulses, nuts and seeds.

Fibre helps keep your gut healthy, your bowel movements regular and makes you feel full on fewer calories, all of which can help you maintain a healthy weight.

It is recommended that we eat 30g of fibre a day.

Our Fibre factsheet has more information on fibre and how to get more in your diet: wcrf-uk.org/fibre



Wholegrains are a good source of fibre, protein and certain vitamins and minerals. Examples include wholegrain breakfast cereals, wholewheat pasta, wholemeal bread, brown rice, wild rice, buckwheat and quinoa.

If you want to eat more wholegrains, a good place to start is by aiming to have **three portions every day**. An example portion is:

- 2 medium slices wholemeal bread
- 1 wholemeal chapatti, roti or pitta
- 2 handfuls dried brown rice, wild rice or wholewheat pasta (75g dried weight)
- 3 tablespoons wholegrain breakfast cereal (40g), like shredded wheat and oats



The link between fibre, wholegrains, vegetables, fruit and cancer

We have strong scientific evidence that:

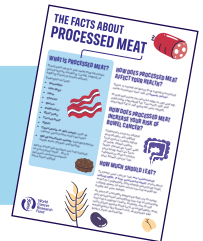
- Having a fibre-rich diet including wholegrains can help protect you against weight gain, overweight and obesity.
- Having a high-fibre diet including wholegrains can help protect you against bowel cancer.
- Eating fruit and vegetables can help protect you against cancers of the mouth, throat and digestive tract.

LIMIT RED AND PROCESSED MEAT

We have strong scientific evidence that eating processed meat and too much red meat increases your risk of bowel cancer, so we recommend limiting how much you have.

Processed meat is any meat that has been preserved by smoking, curing, salting or adding chemical preservatives, such as bacon, ham and sausages. For cancer prevention, we recommend eating little, if any, processed meat.

Our Processed meat factsheet has more information and tips to cut down: wcrf-uk.org/processed-meat



Red meat includes beef, pork, lamb and goat. It is a good source of nutrients like protein, iron and vitamin B12 so it can form part of a healthy, balanced diet. But you should not eat too much as it can increase your risk of bowel cancer.

Red meat should be limited to three 350–500g cooked portions each week, with a portion around the size of a deck of cards or your palm.



Finding an alternative

Instead of eating red and processed meat, try incorporating other sources of protein in your diet instead, such as:

- **Plant-based protein sources** – like tofu, tempeh, soy chunks, nuts, seeds and pulses like beans, chickpeas and lentils
- **Poultry** – like skinless chicken and turkey
- **Non-oily fish** – like cod, tilapia and canned tuna (in spring water)
- **Oily fish** – like salmon, sardines, snapper and mackerel
- **Eggs, dairy products** – like lower-fat milk, cheese, yoghurt and unsweetened plant-based dairy alternatives such as soy

|| I try and eat as much healthy and fresh food as possible and include wholegrains, beans and pulses in my diet – World Cancer Research Fund has lots of delicious recipes that I make. I also try and limit how much red meat I eat, and try and stay away from overly-processed food as much as possible. My daily walks benefit me mentally and physically, and I love them.”

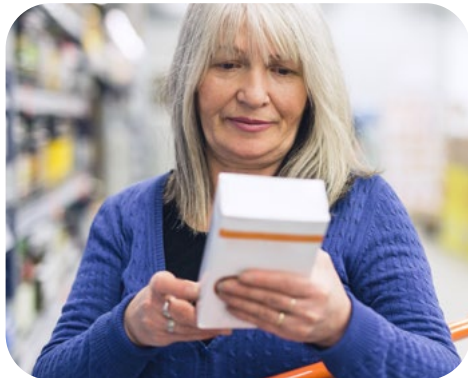
Eunice

Supporter Services Assistant at
World Cancer Research Fund



CHANGES THAT CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

As well as eating more vegetables, fruit and foods containing fibre including wholegrains, and limiting how much red and processed meat you eat, there are other changes you can make that can have a positive impact on your health.



READ NUTRITION LABELS ON PRE-PACKAGED FOOD

Most pre-packaged food have a nutrition label on the back or side of the pack, which shows you how much energy (calories), fat, saturated fat, carbohydrate, sugar, fibre, protein and salt (sodium) a product has.

Some also use traffic light labelling on the front of the pack showing how much fat, saturated fat, sugar and salt each portion has and if it is high (red), medium (amber) or low (green) in those nutrients.

Reading the nutrition label can help you compare similar items and choose the healthier option when food shopping.

Learn more in our Making sense of food and drink labelling guide: wcrf-uk.org/food-labels



LIMIT FAST FOOD, AND OVERLY-PROCESSED FOOD HIGH IN FAT, SUGAR AND SALT

We all enjoy having crisps, biscuits, pastries, chocolate, cake, sweets, sugary drinks like cola, and fast food like fried chicken and chips occasionally – but having these overly-processed food (also known as ultra-processed food) often and in large amounts can contribute to weight gain because they have lots of calories, fat, sugar and salt.

You can limit these kinds of foods and spend less money on takeaways by planning what you will eat for the week and making your meals from scratch at home.

Explore our Budget Bites cookbook for affordable recipe ideas: wcrf-uk.org/budgetbites



MAKE HEALTHIER CHOICES WHEN IT COMES TO FAT

Although fat is important for your health, it is also high in calories so being mindful of how much you eat can help you maintain a healthy weight. Here are some ways to make healthier choices when it comes to fat:

- Use healthier cooking methods like baking, steaming, boiling, stir-frying and air-frying, which use little or no oil or butter to cook.
- Choose lower-fat versions of milk, cheese, yoghurt, mayonnaise, salad dressings and plant-based dairy alternatives.
- Measure out oil with a teaspoon or use an oil spray.
- Swap butter for lower-fat spread.
- Chose lean cuts of meat and trim off any visible fat.



A PINCH LESS SALT

On average, women in England have 7.6g of salt a day – well above the 6g recommendation.

Although the evidence linking added salt to stomach cancer has become less clear, eating too much salt is linked to other health conditions like high blood pressure. That is why we recommend you have no more than 6g of salt a day, or one teaspoon.

Check the nutrition label on pre-packaged food to see how much salt a food has and choose the lower-salt option. Instead of seasoning your food with salt, try flavouring your food with herbs, spices, garlic or ginger.



For lots of easy-to-make recipes, browse the recipes on our website: wcrf-uk.org/recipes

You can also download a range of cookbooks for free, from Everyday Eating to Family Flavours – we have something for everyone: wcrf-uk.org/cookbooks

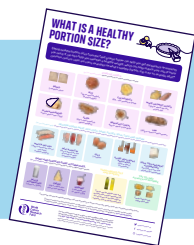


BE MINDFUL OF YOUR PORTION SIZES

It is important to be mindful of how much you eat and drink, as eating too much can contribute to weight gain over time. Here are some ways to be mindful of your portion sizes:

- Check the food label of pre-packaged food to see the suggested serving size as they often have more than one serving per pack.
- Avoid distractions while you are eating, such as watching TV or scrolling on your phone, as this can make you eat more than usual.
- Instead of having a second portion immediately, wait a few minutes to decide if you are still hungry – you could save it for leftovers the next day.

Get familiar with healthy portion sizes in our What is a healthy portion size poster: wcrf-uk.org/portionposter



LIMIT SUGAR-SWEETENED DRINKS

It is easy to forget about the calories we drink. Sugary drinks are not only high in sugar but also calories, and have very few of the nutrients your body needs to keep healthy.

When you drink sugary drinks like cola, energy drinks, lemonade and flavoured milks often, you can drink a lot without feeling full which can contribute to weight gain.

Instead, swap sugary drinks for water, lower-sugar alternatives, lower-fat milk, and unsweetened squash, tea and coffee.



LIMIT ALCOHOL

For many of us, drinking alcohol has become a normal part of our daily lives, whether it is a glass of wine with dinner or after a long day. Although the immediate effects of drinking alcohol are obvious, the long-term effects on our health are typically overlooked.

There is strong scientific evidence that drinking any type of alcohol can increase your risk of mouth, throat, oesophageal, breast, bowel, stomach and liver cancer. Alcohol is also particularly harmful when combined with smoking for some cancer types, such as mouth cancer.

For cancer prevention, it is best not to drink any alcohol at all. If you choose to drink, it is recommended to drink no more than 14 units a week spread over three or more days.



One small
125ml
glass of
wine is
1.5 units




One pint
of normal
strength beer,
lager or cider
is 2 units



One 25ml
measure of
spirits such as
vodka or whiskey
is 1 unit

It is important to remember that alcoholic drinks are high in calories too, so drinking often can contribute to weight gain.



To find out how many calories there are in alcoholic drinks, try our alcohol calorie calculator: wcrf-uk.org/alcohol-calculator

KEEPING ACTIVE

Life can often get in the way of being active, but making time for physical activity is important for your overall health. Whatever your fitness level, ability and age, it is never too late to start.

We have strong scientific evidence that being physically active can lower your risk of bowel, womb (endometrial) and breast cancer. However, 2 in 5 women in the UK are not meeting the minimum physical activity recommendations.



MIXING UP YOUR MOVEMENT

Physical activity is any form of movement which requires you to move your body. This includes everyday activities such as walking your dog, cycling to work, gardening and doing chores around the house, as well as structured exercise such as running, a fitness class and playing sport.

Every week, adults in the UK are recommended to do at least:

- 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity, like brisk walking
- Or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity activity, like running
- And at least two muscle strengthening activities, like carrying heavy shopping or exercises that use your body weight like push-ups and squats*

* If you are over 65, it can be especially beneficial to incorporate these exercises, as well as flexibility and balance exercises, to help protect you against falls and frailty.

If this sounds like a lot to do, it is important to remember that all movement adds up. Even doing shorter bursts of physical activity throughout your day will benefit your health.

There are many other benefits of being physically active, such as:

- Lowering your risk of type 2 diabetes and heart disease.
- Improving mood and overall wellbeing.
- Managing stress, anxiety and depression.
- Improving sleep.
- Supporting your immune system.
- Strengthening muscles and bones, and improving fitness, flexibility and mobility.



Moderate-intensity activity

Moderate-intensity activity makes you breathe a bit faster and gets your heart rate up, but you are still able to talk.

If you are not currently very active, it is best to stick to this level of intensity.

Examples include:

- Brisk walking
- Swimming
- Doing chores around the house
- Dancing
- Cycling
- Gardening



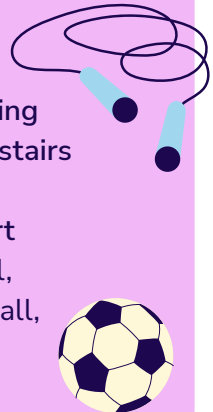
Vigorous-intensity activity

Vigorous-intensity activity makes you breathe hard and fast so if you are working at this level, you will not be able to say more than a few words without pausing for a breath.

Once you have built up your fitness, you can start including these types of exercises into your routine.

Examples include:

- Jogging
- Fast cycling
- Fast swimming
- Walking up stairs
- Skipping
- Playing sport eg volleyball, hockey, netball, football, badminton



Muscle-strengthening activities

These exercises use resistance, such as from weights or your own body weight, to make your muscles work harder than usual. They help to increase muscle strength and keep your bones healthy.

Examples include:

- Carrying heavy shopping
- Carrying young children
- Wheeling/pushing a wheelchair
- Body weight exercises like sit-ups and squats
- Using resistance bands
- Weight training
- Yoga and pilates

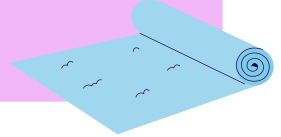


Flexibility and balance exercises

These exercises can keep you flexible, improve your posture, release muscle tension and help lower your risk of falls as you get older.

Examples include:

- Movements such as shoulder and back stretches
- Standing on one leg
- Yoga and pilates
- Tai chi
- Dancing



Although flexibility and balance exercises are gentle and do not usually count towards your weekly physical activity target, they are still important to do at least twice a week.



If you have been inactive for a while or have any underlying health conditions, it is best to speak to your doctor before making any major changes to how active you are.

SITTING LESS

As well as keeping active, it is also important to limit how much time you spend sitting down watching TV, being on your computer or scrolling on your phone. In fact, we have strong scientific evidence that spending too much time in front of a screen is linked to weight gain.

If you find yourself sitting for long periods of time, try to get up and move around as often as you can. Try taking a short 30–60 second break for every 30 minutes you are sitting down.



Boosting your everyday activity

Being physically active does not mean you have to go to the gym – all forms of movement count. Here are some ways you can be active in your everyday life:

- **Active transport**

Consider cycling, jogging or brisk walking as a way to travel.



- **Energise your lunch break**

Incorporate some movement into your lunch break such as going for a walk around your local park or office area, finding a nearby set of stairs to walk up and down, or joining a quick fitness class with a friend or colleague.

- **Be active throughout your day**

Take the stairs instead of using an escalator or lift, or get off one stop earlier on your train or bus journey.

- **Keep it fun**

Get involved in activities that you enjoy as it is easier to stick to. Consider inviting a friend or family member to join you as exercising together can make the experience more fun and motivating.



Remember that any amount of physical activity is better than nothing – it is about starting small and gradually building up how much you do.

For more support on getting active, explore our guide **Living an active life**: wcrf-uk.org/activelife



THE MENSTRUAL CYCLE

The menstrual cycle is a monthly cycle that prepares the body for pregnancy. The cycle starts when you get your period, also called menstrual bleeding. Girls typically get their first period at 12 years old, but it can happen as early as 8 years old.

As women, we are all familiar with the various changes we experience in our energy, mood and appetite levels throughout our menstrual cycle, and the feeling of discomfort during our period. That is why it is important to eat a healthy, balanced diet to give your body all the nutrients it needs to keep healthy.

When you are on your period, you may want to eat more iron-rich food to replace any iron you lose from your period, such as moderate amounts of red meat, poultry, fish, pulses, dark leafy vegetables (like spinach, kale



and broccoli), nuts, seeds, dried fruit like apricots and iron-fortified breakfast cereals.

Your body finds it more difficult to use iron from plant sources but eating them together with vitamin C-rich food can help. For example, having a glass of orange juice with iron-fortified breakfast cereals or squeezing lemon juice on broccoli. Peppers, strawberries, papaya and tomatoes are other good sources of vitamin C.

It is also important to keep physically active throughout your menstrual cycle, even if it is doing gentle physical activity like walking, swimming or yoga. But listen to your body and do what feels comfortable for you.

EATING WELL DURING PREGNANCY

Although having a healthy, balanced diet is important in all stages of your life, it is especially important during pregnancy to help your baby grow and develop healthily.

A healthy, balanced diet means eating a variety of vegetables, fruit, wholegrains, pulses, nuts, seeds, lean protein, plenty of water (6–8 glasses a day) and limiting foods high in fat, sugar and salt. You should also limit caffeine, and avoid smoking and drinking alcohol.

Along with eating well, it is also important to keep active for as long as you feel comfortable. Try doing at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity activity every day like brisk walking or swimming, but make sure you are not doing any activities that cause your heart rate to go up too high. After you have your baby, speak to your doctor about when you can start exercising again.



IMPORTANT NUTRIENTS FOR PREGNANCY

There are some vitamins and minerals that need extra attention during pregnancy to help your baby grow and develop in a healthy way.

Folic acid

It is important to take a **400mcg folic acid supplement** every day from when you start planning a pregnancy until 12 weeks into your pregnancy.

You can also find folic acid in some foods including spinach, broccoli, yeast extract, peas, beans, wholegrains, poultry and fortified breakfast cereals.

Iodine

Iodine is important for your baby's brain development so try including iodine-rich foods in your diet like lower-fat milk, cheese and yoghurt, fish, eggs, nuts, fortified breakfast cereals and unsweetened fortified plant-based dairy alternatives.

If you are vegan or vegetarian, your doctor may advise you to take an iodine supplement.

Vitamin D

During the winter months, it is recommended to take a **10mcg (400IU) vitamin D supplement** every day. Your body makes vitamin D when your skin is exposed to the sun in the summer months.

You can also get vitamin D from foods such as oily fish (like salmon and mackerel), egg yolks, fortified breakfast cereals and unsweetened fortified plant-based dairy alternatives.

Calcium

It is important to get enough calcium through your diet such as from lower-fat milk, cheese and yoghurt, dark leafy vegetables (like spinach, kale and broccoli), nuts (like almonds and hazelnuts), calcium-set tofu, fortified breakfast cereals and unsweetened fortified plant-based dairy alternatives.

Iron

It is important to include iron-rich food in your diet like moderate amounts of red meat, poultry, fish, pulses and green leafy vegetables (like spinach, kale and broccoli).

Your body finds it more difficult to use iron from plant sources but eating them together with vitamin C-rich food can help. For example, having a glass of orange juice with your iron-fortified breakfast cereal or squeezing lemon juice on broccoli. Peppers, strawberries, papaya and tomatoes are other good sources of vitamin C.

Too much of a good thing

Vitamin A is important for the development of your baby, but having too much can cause harm. You should avoid taking supplements with vitamin A or retinol, and avoid eating liver or liver products.



Eating oily fish is good for your overall health and the health of your baby because it has lots of important nutrients such as omega-3 fats. However, oily fish may have low levels of pollutants, so it is best to only have two portions of oily fish a week if you are pregnant.



For more information on eating well during pregnancy, visit: [nhs.uk/pregnancy/keeping-well/have-a-healthy-diet](https://www.nhs.uk/pregnancy/keeping-well/have-a-healthy-diet)

IF YOU CAN, BREASTFEED YOUR BABY

Deciding whether to breastfeed your baby is a personal choice, but if you are a new mum or planning to have a baby, choosing to breastfeed has many benefits for both you and your baby.

Breast milk has all the nutrients your baby needs to grow and develop, and may also protect your baby against overweight and obesity later in life which lowers their future cancer risk. But breastfeeding is not only good for your baby, it can also lower your risk of breast cancer.

Any amount of breastfeeding is beneficial, but if you can, you should exclusively breastfeed your baby for the first six months of life and continue while introducing solid food and water for as long as you and your baby want.



For further information on breastfeeding and support, visit: [nhs.uk/conditions/baby/breastfeeding-and-bottle-feeding](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/breastfeeding-and-bottle-feeding)

THE MENOPAUSE

The menopause is a natural part of getting older when a woman's period stops and typically happens between 45 and 55 years old.

During the menopause, you may experience different symptoms like hot flushes, sweating at night, difficulty sleeping, heart palpitations, difficulty concentrating, muscle aches, joint pain, mood changes and weight gain or changes in your body shape.

Each person's symptoms can be different and last for a different amount of time.



KEEPING HEALTHY DURING THE MENOPAUSE

It is important to take care of your health during this time, especially because the changes to your hormones can increase your risk of heart disease and osteoporosis (weak bones). If you are living with overweight or obesity, you are also at a higher risk of postmenopausal breast cancer.

That is why it is important to keep healthy during the menopause. You can do this by:

- **Eating a healthy, balanced diet** including a variety of at least five portions of vegetables and fruit, pulses, wholegrains, lean proteins and drinking plenty of water (6–8 glasses a day).
- **Taking a 10mcg (400 IU) vitamin D supplement** every day during the winter months.
- **Including calcium-rich food in your diet** such as lower-fat milk, cheese and yoghurt, dark leafy greens (like spinach, kale and broccoli), fortified breakfast cereals and unsweetened fortified plant-based dairy alternatives.
- **Limiting alcohol.**
- **Avoiding smoking.**
- **Keeping active** – aim to include exercises like walking and dancing, and include muscle-strengthening activities like squats and carrying heavy shopping to help keep your bones strong.
- **Maintaining a healthy weight.**



For further advice and information on the menopause, visit:
[nhs.uk/conditions/menopause](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause)

READY FOR CHANGE?

Now that you have read through this guide, you can start thinking of the benefits that maintaining a healthy weight, eating well and keeping active have on your health and cancer risk. We hope that you feel inspired.



We know that changing habits are not always easy – even if you know it is good for your health. But by focusing on making one change at a time, there is a greater chance of successfully sticking to your healthy habits in the long term.

Visit our website for more tips and recipes to help you make your healthy changes stick: wcrf-uk.org



Disclaimer

The information contained in this publication relates to the general adult population and is not aimed at individuals who are following special diets (on medical advice) or who have special dietary or exercise needs. The information contained in our health information publications relate to the prevention of cancer. We are unable to give medical advice. For specific advice, please consult your doctor.

CANCER PREVENTION RECOMMENDATIONS



Be a healthy weight



Be physically active



Eat a diet rich in wholegrains, vegetables, fruit and beans



Limit consumption of 'fast foods' and other processed foods high in fat, starches or sugars



Limit consumption of red and processed meat



Limit consumption of sugar-sweetened drinks



Limit alcohol consumption



Do not use supplements for cancer prevention



For mothers: breastfeed your baby, if you can



After a cancer diagnosis: follow our Recommendations, if you can

Not smoking and avoiding other exposure to tobacco and excess sun are also important in reducing cancer risk.

Following these Recommendations is likely to reduce intakes of salt, saturated and trans fats, which together will help prevent other non-communicable diseases.

To read our full Recommendations visit: wcrf-uk.org/10ways

ABOUT WORLD CANCER RESEARCH FUND

World Cancer Research Fund examines how diet, weight and physical activity affect your risk of developing and surviving cancer. As part of an international network of charities, we have been funding life-saving research, influencing global public health policy and educating the public since 1982.

While society continues searching for a cure, our prevention and survival work is helping people live longer, happier and healthier lives – free from the devastating effects of cancer.

Will you help us build a world where fewer people every day get preventable cancers? Our work is funded solely by charitable donations. Your support will help us continue providing easy-to-access health information to help people reduce their risk of cancer: wcrf-uk.org/donate

For any enquiries or to request the information in large print, please contact us:

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All information correct at time of print.

Next review date August 2026 WEH8WH

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