Your Weight and Cancer



••••

...

small changes, better choices





E de

If you're overweight, your cancer risk is higher

A bit of extra weight is not just harmless extra 'padding'.

Body fat makes hormones that increase your risk of cancer.

Being overweight increases the amount of the hormone insulin in your body, which encourages the growth of cancer cells. Higher levels of insulin are found in people with bowel, kidney and pancreatic cancers.

Fat cells in your body make the hormone oestrogen, which increases the risk of breast cancer and womb cancer. Most adults in Ireland are overweight – and many don't even know it.



Here are some practical ways to lose weight to reduce your risk of cancer. You can start today. Making small changes and better choices really does add up.

Find out if you're a healthy weight

- You are more likely to get some cancers if you are overweight.
- If you carry weight around your middle, you are at greater risk.
- You can't tell if you're overweight just by looking. You'll need a tape measure and a scales.

Measuring your waist

- Place the tape measure around the narrowest point between your ribs and your hips.
- Make sure it's snug but not digging into your skin.

TELEVISION

• Don't hold your breath!

You are at increased risk of cancer if:

- Your waistline measures more than 94 cm (37 inches) for men
- Your waistline measures more than 81 cm (32 inches) for women

Being heavy around your middle increases the risk of bowel and kidney cancers.

Body Mass Index (BMI)

Your BMI is a number that tells you if you are the right weight for your height.

If you know your height and weight, you can use this chart to work out your BMI.



What does your BMI measurement mean?

If your BMI is:

Less than 18.5	You are underweight, which can lead to some health problems
18.5 - 24.9	You are a healthy, normal weight and at a lower risk of cancer
25 - 29.9	You are overweight, which increases your cancer risk
30 or more	You are obese, and your risk of cancer is even greater
40 or more	You are extremely obese, and your risk of cancer is even greater

If you are underweight or overweight, it is important to see your doctor. You would benefit from a medical check-up and advice on diet and lifestyle.

Small changes really can make a difference

Sweet treats

Did you know?

- Cakes, biscuits and desserts should be enjoyed only once or twice a week. Swap the rest for a piece of fruit to eat on the go, after meals or with your tea or coffee.
- Many savoury sauces are made with a lot of sugar – for example, ketchup, brown sauce, sweet 'n' sour sauce, curry sauce, chilli sauce and relish. Try a squeeze of lemon juice or vinegar or yogurt-based sauces instead.

Brown or white?

Stay fuller for longer. Get more wholegrains into your diet by making small changes:

- For breakfast: Pick porridge, muesli or wholegrain cereal. And remember, lots of children's cereals come in wholegrain options too.
- For sandwiches: Choose brown bread instead of white in your weekly shop and at the deli counter.
- For dinner: When cooking rice or pasta dishes, choose brown rice or wholewheat pasta.

Salty snacks

Eating less salt is good for your heart and may reduce your risk of stomach cancer.

- Crisps, peanuts and popcorn have lots of salt – but so do plenty of sweet foods. Check the salt content on the label on your breakfast cereal and your sweet treats too.
- Adding pepper, herbs, garlic, spices and lemon juice can help you cut the salt in your cooking and at the table.
- There is a lot of salt in ready meals, frozen pizzas, oven chips, packet soups, sauces and spice mixes. Try to cook from scratch and freeze extra portions.

If you cut out one biscuit (100 calories) every day, you could lose 10 pounds in a year.

The big picture: so what's for dinner?

Building a healthy meal: Pick your protein

When we're thinking about our meals, we usually think about the protein first.

Pick fresh chicken, turkey, beans or fish most of the time. Cut down on red meat like pork and lamb chops, beef burgers and steak. Choose them less often. Check out the links to recipes on page 25.

Processed meats like rashers, sausages, black and white pudding, ham, corned beef, salami and hot dogs are high in salt and high in calories. Save them for an occasional fry-up or barbecue, and have turkey, tuna or low-fat cheese in your sandwich at lunch.



Go meat-free for a day a week: it's fast, easy and cheap

Peas, beans and lentils are full of protein and fibre – and really fill you up.

- Use frozen peas and beans they are as good for you as fresh, and are ready in a minute.
- Try tinned beans and lentils they are already cooked and are great in salads, casseroles and soups.
- Switch to low-sugar, low-salt baked beans they're good for you and the kids.

Eggs, cheese and other dairy products – for example, yogurt – give you protein and calcium, and are real family favourites.

You probably have all the ingredients you need for a fast, meat-free dinner already. Check out the links to recipes on page 25.

If you're getting veggie ready-meals or soups, be sure to read the labels. See page 28 for help.

Better choices

Count up your servings every day

Use the food pyramid to see what you need to add to your meals and snacks, and what you need to swap.

Do you eat enough from the bottom of the food pyramid?

For adults, teenagers and children aged five and over

Foods and drinks NOT every day Not needed for high in fat, good health. sugar and salt Fats, In very small spreads and amounts Needed for good health. Enjoy a variety every day oils Meat, poultry, Servina beans and nuts salads and Servings

The food you eat can help you to be a healthy weight. Losing weight will reduce your cancer risk.

Small changes to how and what you eat will make a big difference.

Remember:

Children and teenagers need more milk, yogurt and cheese. Active teenage boys and men may need more wholemeal bread and cereals, potatoes, pasta and rice.



How much do you have on your plate?

The amount of food on your plate at each meal should fill your own two hands:



Fill half your plate with veg – that's right, half!

Getting in 5 – 7 portions of fruit and veg means eating them at every meal, so have some fruit at breakfast, a salad with your sandwich and stick a piece of fruit in your bag for when you're out and about.

But make sure half your dinner plate is loaded with veg.



Portion size

So, half your plate is filled with veg – but how do you measure the rest? Here are some handy size comparisons:



You should have only very small portions of some foods because they have a lot of fat. For example:



A portion pack of butter and margarine, 1 teaspoon each of oil and mayonnaise

Other foods like cake, chocolate and biscuits you should have less often – only once or twice a week – and only small amounts.



Healthy eating: it's a family affair

It's important to set a good example of your eating habits for your wider family and the young people in your life. Keeping your children at a healthy weight will reduce their risk of cancer as older people.

If you share your day with children, try to have meals together whenever you can, and sit at the table. If evenings are too busy, have breakfast or after-school snacks together.

Get children of all ages to help with preparing meals. Younger children like the messy bits, and older ones will be proud to serve food they helped to make.



Use plates and cutlery that match their size, not yours.

1 out of every 4 children aged 5 to 12 in Ireland is overweight or obese.

A 5-year-old needs half the amount of food an adult does.

Remember:

Kids don't need to eat as much as you might think. Each meal they eat should fill their two cupped hands – not yours. Use plates, cups and cutlery that match their size.

Adapted from www.safefood.eu/Start/6-Healthy-Habits/Portion-Sizes.aspx

Top tips for feeding kids

- Give them smaller portions to start with. Give more if they ask for it.
- Don't make children eat all the food on their plate. Let them stop when they've had enough.
- Include brightly-coloured fruits and vegetables in every meal.
- If your child has a favourite meal that's healthy, offer others like it.
- Let your child pick out the vegetables in the supermarket or shop.

Top tips for feeding kids

- Offer healthy foods more than once, even if a child won't eat it the first time. If it's rejected again, try again a few months later – don't make it a fight.
- Give a choice of water or milk at meals and in packed lunches, not juice or cordial. If you do serve juice, water it down.
- Be sure to read the labels, especially for 'easy' foods for lunchboxes like fruit snacks, cheese strings, single-serve cheeses in wax or foil, yogurt tubes, 'healthy' bars and breakfast biscuits. Many of them have lots of sugar or salt.
- A little lemon juice will stop cut fruit from going brown, so it's fresh and ready for snacks and school lunches perfect for little ones.

 ${\tt Adapted\ from\ www.safefood.eu/Start/6-Healthy-Habits/Portion-Sizes.aspx}$

Liquid calories



Sugary fizzy drinks, fruit squashes, cordials and fruit juice have a lot of sugar and a lot of calories.

Drink water with your meal as often as you can.

Know your limits

Alcoholic drinks also have a lot of sugar and calories. Drinking alcohol is often a big reason people gain weight and have an increased risk of cancer.

Avoid alcohol, or limit your intake to:

Men No more than two standard drinks per day



Drinking

the risk of

alcohol increases

And it's not just the drinks that have extra calories...





Going for just the one?



Energy in, energy out

Calories are the energy in our food and drinks.

To keep your weight the same, you need to eat and drink as many calories as you burn – in other words, you need to balance the scale.

To lose weight, you need to eat and drink fewer calories than you burn.



Remember, small changes make a big difference. If the balance is off by a little bit every day and you're taking in more than you burn, you'll gain weight. But...

How many calories do I need every day?

Women aged 20 – 50	1,800 – 2,000 calories
Women over 50	1,600 – 1,800 calories
Men aged 20 – 50	2,200 – 2,800 calories
Men over 50	2,000 – 2,400 calories

Keep moving

No matter what weight you are, everyone benefits from being more active. And remember, getting exercise is also part of losing weight and cutting your risk of cancer.

Get up!

We all sit too much, and for too long. We sit in the car, on the bus or train, at work, and watching TV. Think about ways you can move more, and plan how to get more exercise.

Talk to your doctor about the right kind of exercise for you, particularly if you have a health condition.

How active do I need to be?

Every little helps, but the more activity the better.

Aim for 30 minutes a day, at least 5 days a week. You don't have to do the 30 minutes all at once – you can break it down into 10-minute chunks. The exercise should at least make you a bit warm and a bit out of breath.



Eat, move, sleep Move more, sit less and you'll sleep better. If you get more sleep, you're less likely to crave snacks and sugary drinks to keep you going.

Page 20

Where do I start?

Start small. Begin with 5 or 10 minutes of exercise, and then build it up to three times a day.

- Get up and move: Stand up and walk around whenever you can at home and at work.
- Do what you already do, but faster: Walking, household chores and gardening are all great exercise.
- Change how you get around: Walk or cycle, or park farther away.
- Pick up a hobby: Maybe something you used to enjoy, or always wanted to start, like swimming, dancing, yoga or golf.

What do you already do?

Think about your day and where you could squeeze in more exercise. Be realistic, and think positively about how to be more active every day.

- Waking up: Could you do some exercise in the morning, or walk the dog?
- **Getting out:** Could you change how you get to work, or walk the kids to school?
- During the day: Can you take the stairs instead of the lift, or get some exercise at lunchtime?
- Getting home: Could you get off a stop or two early, and walk the rest of the way?
- In the evening: How about a walk after dinner with a friend instead of watching TV?

Get fit with friends and family

- Kids provide great exercise opportunities play football in the garden, have a pillow fight, head to the playground or play an active game.
- Be active outdoors walk the dog, go for a hike or take a walk in the park.
- Go for a cycle as a family.
- Meet a friend to exercise together you'll encourage each other if you're feeling lazy.

Children and teenagers should get moderate to vigorous exercise for at least 1 hour every day.

Make the most of your family's time together

Lots of outdoor family fun is free. There are parks, playgrounds and walking trails to suit all ages all around the country.

Plan an active day out, or find indoor activities for bad weather, like swimming pools and sports halls. You can get more information about activities in your area at **www.getirelandactive.ie**

Getting fitter

The more active you are, the lower your cancer risk. So, as you get fitter, get more active – go a little farther or a little longer each week.

Once you're able to exercise for longer, try some more vigorous activity. That's the kind that leaves you out of breath.

You could try jogging, running, dancing, aerobics, playing a sport or taking a fitness class.

Mix it up

Aim for 60 minutes of moderate activity 5 days a week, or a mix of moderate and vigorous activity.

On at least 2 of those days, try to choose activities that build muscle and improve balance.

Things like these:

Build muscle Digging Working in the garden Carrying groceries Using weight machines or hand-held weights

Improve balance Yoga Dancing

Trampolining

More ideas

When it comes to losing weight, the small changes and better choices you make only show over time. That means you have to stick to it, which is a lot easier if you get help along the way.

Cook up something new

Check out these healthy and delicious recipes to suit all tastes: https://irishheart.ie/recipes/

Try something different for the kids' lunches

Here are some ideas for healthy family meals and snacks: www.safefood.eu/recipes.aspx

Tired of just walking around your neighbourhood?

Find a hiking trail **www.irishtrails.ie** Do a run in a local park **www.parkrun.ie** Check out the sports near you **www.sportireland.ie** Stay active in older age **www.ageandopportunity.ie**

Get thinking about your drinking

Learn about how cutting back on alcohol – even a little – can benefit your health: **www.askaboutalcohol.ie**

Reading food labels

We're all in a hurry doing the weekly trip to the supermarket, or running to the local shop. But an extra minute or two reading the labels on your food can keep extra calories, fat, sugar and salt out of your diet, and help to drop your weight and your cancer risk.

Back is best!

The label on the front of the food package you're buying might say a food is 'light' or 'reduced-fat'. But the only way to tell how much sugar, salt and fat is in the food is by reading the label on the back. That's where they tell you what's in the food, and how nutritious it is.

Ingredients: What's at the top of the list?

Ingredients are listed from most to least. So, if chicken is listed as the first ingredient on a chicken curry ready-meal, then it has more chicken than any other ingredient. Sometimes you'll be surprised how high up the list of ingredients you'll see sugar and salt. At the end of this booklet there is a tear-out shopping list – and on the back of the shopping list is a chart to help you to read food labels as you shop. See page 27.

Shopping list

Tear out this list and stock your kitchen with a variety of foods for healthy meals in a hurry. Improve your diet, lose weight and reduce your cancer risk.

- Beans kidney beans, chickpeas, lentils, low-sugar baked beans
- Rice brown, long-grain rice mixes (pre-cooked packets are fast; dry is cheaper)
- Pasta wholewheat pasta and noodles
- Other grains barley, couscous, wholewheat crackers, breadsticks, bread crumbs
- Tinned vegetables tomatoes, mixed vegetables, green beans, mushrooms
- Tinned and dried fruits tinned fruit in juice, raisins
- Sauces pasta, pizza (low sugar or no added sugar)
- Soups tinned soups, broth, stock cubes or stock pots, dried soup mixes (low salt)
- Tinned fish tuna, salmon, mackerel, sardines
- Oils vegetable, olive, coconut, cooking spray
- Peanut butter (no added sugar)
- Low-fat evaporated milk (to use instead of cream in sauces)
- Vinegars
- Your favourite herbs and spices
- Fresh vegetables and fruits
- Low-fat or non-fat milk
- Yogurt (without added sugar)
- Reduced-fat cheeses cheddar, mozzarella, Swiss, Parmesan
- Eggs
- Sauces Worcestershire, chilli, relish, ketchup (low sugar) and mustard
- Salad dressings with olive oil or reduced-fat
- Sparkling water
- Frozen vegetables and fruits
- Readymade soups (low salt)
- Breads 100% whole-grain breads, baps and wraps
- Meats chicken breasts, turkey mince
- Fish cod, salmon, low-salt fish fingers

Adapted from https://www.cancer.org/healthy/eat-healthy-get-active/eat-healthy/ shopping-list-basic-ingredients-for-a-healthy-kitchen.html

Labels: dare to compare

Cut this page out and stick it in your wallet – then you can make better choices while you shop.

Compare the nutrition label on the back of your food to this chart. It's better to buy foods that have low or medium levels of sugar, fat and salt.

	Sugars (per 100g)	Fats (per 100g)	Salt (per 100g)	Fibre (per 100g)
High	over 15g	over 20g	over 1.5g	over 6g
Medium	5-15g	3-20g	0.3-1.5g	2-6g
Low	under 5g	under 3g	under 0.3	under 3g

Don't like what you see? A better choice is probably right next to it on the shelf.

Adapted from the shopping card tools of the Irish Heart Foundation www.irishheart.ie and Safefood www.safefood.eu

If you reach a healthy weight, your cancer risk will be lower

People who have a healthy lifestyle have an estimated 18% lower risk of cancer.

What are the best ways to cut your cancer risk?

- 1. Don't smoke.
- 2. Be a healthy weight.

Once you're a healthy weight, you'll be less likely to get the following cancers:

- Breast cancer
 Pancreatic cancer
 Bowel cancer
 Oesophageal cancer
 Gallbladder cancer
 Kidney cancer
- Womb cancer

To lose weight and keep it off permanently, you will need to make small changes and better choices about food and being active – for good. Be realistic, and plan your exercise and meals in a way that makes sense for you.

For most people who are overweight, losing one or two pounds a week is excellent progress. Some weeks will be more difficult than others, but the key is... keep going. It's worth it.

www.wcrf-uk.org/uk/preventing-cancer/cancer-prevention-recommendations

Page 28

Any questions?



Call our Cancer Nurseline on Freephone 1800 200 700 or email cancernurseline@irishcancer.ie for support, information and advice about anything cancer-related.

You can also look at our website: www.cancer.ie

Drop in to our Daffodil Centres, which provide cancer information, support and advice. The Centres are staffed by cancer nurses and trained volunteers. You don't need an appointment – just call in. You can see a list of our Daffodil Centres on our website.

Find us on Facebook

Follow us on Twitter @IrishCancerSociety