



Did you know that being inactive can contribute to your risk of developing some cancers?

A recent study estimated that about 25 per cent of cancers diagnosed in Australia are caused by the combined factors of overweight and obesity, physical inactivity and poor nutrition. The good news is that physical activity is a fantastic way to help reduce your risk of cancer and prevent a range of health problems including heart disease, type 2 diabetes and obesity. To help reduce your cancer risk, the more physically active the better!

Why should I be active?

Being active can reduce your risk of developing a number of cancers. Physical activity can also help you maintain a healthy weight, which reduces your risk of cancers linked with being overweight or obese.

What happens if I am inactive?

Being inactive can lead to weight gain which is linked to several cancers including bowel, postmenopausal breast, kidney, pancreatic, liver, endometrial and oesophageal cancer. Research also suggests that spending a large amount of the day sitting without moving can increase your risk of developing certain types of cancers.

How much physical activity do I need to reduce my cancer risk?

To reduce your risk of cancer, aim for 60 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity or 30 minutes of vigorous intensity physical activity each day. Physical

activity does not need to be continuous. As long as you are active for at least 10 minutes at a time you can count this towards your daily total. For example you could walk three times a day for 20 minutes to achieve 60 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity. Try to move as much as possible throughout the day. If you spend a lot of time sitting, get up and move around regularly.

What is moderate intensity physical activity?

Moderate intensity physical activity causes a slight increase in heart rate and breathing. Examples of moderate intensity physical activity include brisk walking, mowing the lawn, vacuuming, cycling, yoga, pilates or medium-paced swimming.

What is vigorous intensity physical activity?

Vigorous intensity physical activity makes you 'huff and puff' and occurs when you exercise at 70 to 80 per cent of your maximum heart rate. Examples of vigorous intensity physical activity include running, aerobics, football, fast cycling, rowing, circuit training, tennis, basketball, netball or soccer.

What do I need to do before I start being physically active?

Consult your doctor or health care professional before starting any exercise, especially if you have not exercised recently, have a chronic or recurring condition or are pregnant, breastfeeding or elderly.

Maintain a healthy weight to reduce your cancer risk.

A waistline over 100cm for men and 85cm for women significantly increases your risk of developing some cancers. Maintaining a healthy weight is about getting the balance right between what you eat and how physically active you are.

Quick tips and hints

Increase movement at home

- Walk around the lounge room during TV ad breaks.
- Stay standing next time you are chatting to a friend on the phone.

Take time to be active

- Put on your favourite music while you are doing housework and dance away.
- Stretch your arms and legs while you are watching TV.

Increase movement at work

- Deliver your message in person instead of emailing.
- Schedule a walking meeting.
- Take the stairs instead of the lift.
- Search online for some simple exercises you can do at your desk.
- Go for a 15 minute walk on your lunch break.

Increase movement while commuting

- Walk to your local shops instead of driving.
- Get off the train or bus one stop earlier and walk the rest of the way.
- Park further away from shops and walk the rest of the way.
- Walk or ride to and from work, school or university.

Increase physical activity in your leisure time

- Take the family for a bushwalk.
- Organise a game of cricket or a social walk instead of catching up with friends over a beer or coffee.
- Go for a bike ride with your family instead of a Sunday drive.

Making physical activity part of your daily routine

It can be hard to make healthy changes especially if you lead a busy life. The following tips can help you overcome some common obstacles.

I don't have time to exercise

Many people lead busy lives and find it hard to fit exercise into their day. Physical activity includes planned exercise and movement that occurs throughout the day while completing everyday activities. Simple changes such as taking the stairs instead of the lift or escalator, walking to the shops instead of driving or taking public transport can increase the amount of movement you do every day. Make the effort to fit physical activity into your daily routine!

I can't afford to exercise

Reduce the cost of exercising by going for a walk or run around your neighbourhood or local park. Some parks even provide public exercise equipment which you can use for free. Many councils offer free or low cost activities. Check with your local council to see what is available in your area.

I think it is too hot to be active in Queensland

Exercise indoors at home or at your local gym with a fan or air-conditioner. Schedule outdoor activity early in the morning or in the evening, to avoid the hottest part of the day. Try water based exercise such as swimming, aqua aerobics or water polo. Always make sure you drink plenty of water and are SunSmart when outdoors, even in winter.

I feel unsafe being active outdoors

Ask a friend, workmate or relative to be active with you or take your dog on a walk. Be active while it is still light outside or stick to well-lit areas. Choose a public place such as a park, beach, shopping centre or local gym.

I don't enjoy physical activity

Brainstorm some types of physical activity you may enjoy and see if you can sign up for trial classes. Ask a friend to be active with you to help you stay motivated. Set yourself a goal and work towards it, such as participating in a fun run, being able to walk a certain distance or getting a personal best time.

I don't have the motivation to be active

Before you start physical activity set some realistic goals. Start small and as you reach each goal, set a new one. It can also help to get the support of an exercise professional. Personal trainers, exercise physiologists, and physiotherapists can help you to set personalised exercise goals and can check in with you to make sure you are keeping on track.

References

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3. Cancer Council Australia. 2013. National Cancer Prevention Policy: Overweight and obesity, physical activity and nutrition. <http://wiki.cancer.org.au/prevention/Obesity> (accessed August 9, 2013).

Disclaimer

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