

# Men and cancer



Men's cancers

*“What I’ve seen too many men do is wait until they get cancer before they start to do the right thing”*

## How many men get cancer?

Even though less than half of the Australian population are men, more men than women are diagnosed with cancer each year. In 2007 in Australia; 62,476 men were diagnosed with cancer and 22,562 men died from it (see table for comparison with women). Men have a one in two (50 per cent) risk of cancer before age 85 compared with a one in three (33 per cent) risk for women.

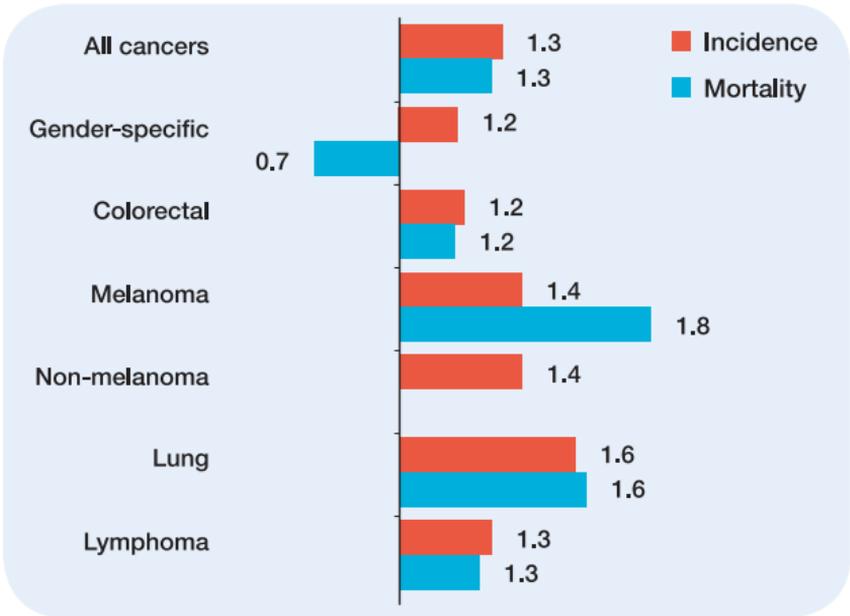
## Cancers that affect men

Although prostate cancer and testicular cancer only occur in men, they are not the only cancers that affect men. Men do worse than women for all of the most common cancers, except the gender-specific cancers.

**Table 1: Men’s health in Australia (2007)**

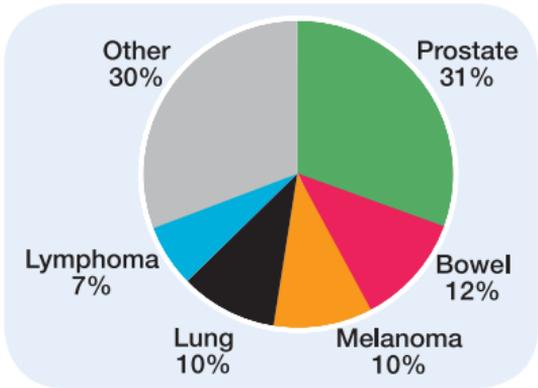
	Men	Women	Total
Population	10,660,917	10,770,864	21,431,781
	<b>49.7%</b>	50.3%	
Cancer cases	62,476	46,713	109,189
	<b>57.2%</b>	42.8%	
Cancer deaths	22,562	17,322	39,884
	<b>56.6%</b>	43.4%	
Lifetime cancer risk	1 in 2	1 in 3	
Life expectancy at birth	79.3 years	83.9 years	

**Figure 1: Cancer diagnoses and deaths sex ratio, Australia, 2007**

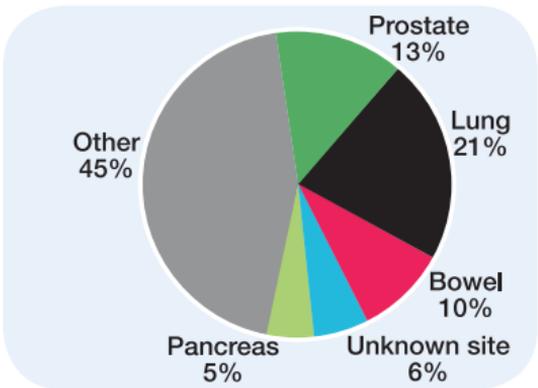


**Figure 2: Cancer diagnoses and deaths in Australian men, 2007**

**Diagnoses**

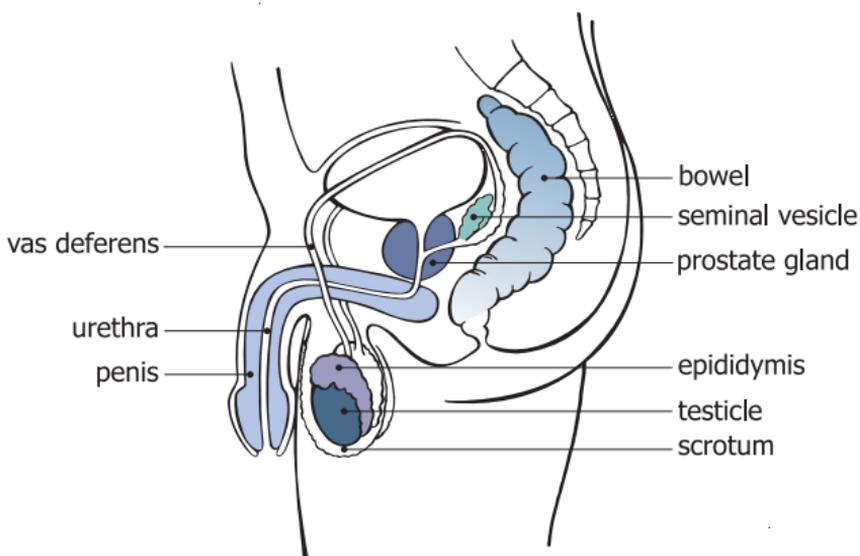


**Deaths**



## Prostate cancer

Prostate cancer is the most common cancer diagnosed in Western Australia. Each year more than 2,000 men in Western Australia face the news they have prostate cancer. Unfortunately we're still not sure what men can do to reduce their risk of prostate cancer.



## Bowel cancer

Bowel cancer is the second most common cancer in men. We know a lot about preventing bowel cancer and a lot about finding bowel cancer early, yet it still accounts for more than 12 per cent of all cancer deaths in Western Australia. Maintaining a healthy weight, being physically active, eating well and drinking less alcohol are all things men can do to reduce their risk of bowel cancer.

## **Skin cancer**

Every year approximately 250,000 Australian men get skin cancer. That's around 29 men for every hour of every day. Skin cancer is more common in men and more men than women die from skin cancers. The good news is that skin cancer is almost totally preventable and when found early can be very successfully treated.

## **Lung cancer**

Despite a significant decline in lung cancer deaths among men, it is still the leading cause of cancer deaths in Western Australian men. Lung cancer is mostly a preventable disease, with cigarette smoking by far the main cause.

## **Testicular cancer**

Testicular cancer is a relatively uncommon cancer, accounting for less than one percent of all cancers in Australia. Unlike most other cancers however, the majority of testicular cancer occurs in men under 45 years. It is not known what causes testicular cancer, but having an undescended testicle increases a man's risk. The good news is that treatment is very effective if testicular cancer is detected early.

# What you can do

## Stop smoking

Despite successful efforts to reduce smoking in Western Australia, almost one in five men continues to smoke. Quitting smoking has major and immediate benefits at any age, and smokers don't have to do it alone! Talk to your doctor or call the Quitline 13 78 48 for confidential counselling. For extra support to quit, register for one of the Cancer Council WA's Fresh Start courses. More information is available from the Cancer Council Helpline 13 11 20.

## Avoid or limit alcohol

A lot more men than women drink at a risky level.

Despite evidence suggesting that alcohol is protective for heart disease, there is no evidence to support any reduction in cancer risk. In fact, drinking alcohol increases the risk of many different types of cancer including mouth, liver and bowel cancers.

We recommend avoiding alcohol. If you choose to drink, then drink no more than 2 standard drinks a day. Men who drink more than 2 standard drinks in a day increase their short-term risk of health and social problems.



100 mL  
(1 glass wine)



285 mL  
(1 middy full strength  
beer)



30 mL  
(1 nip spirit)

## Be SunSmart

Cancer statistics suggest that men aren't as vigilant about protecting their skin as women. On an average summer weekend, 20 per cent of men are sunburnt, compared to 15 per cent of women.

Skin cancer is mainly caused by UV radiation from the sun so it's simple to lower your risk by reducing your sun exposure. Be SunSmart and save your skin by combining these five simple steps:

- Slip on sun protective clothing
- Slop on SPF 30+ sunscreen
- Slap on a hat
- Seek shade
- Slide on some sunglasses

And remember to take extra care between 10 am and 3 pm when UV radiation is most intense.

## Move your body

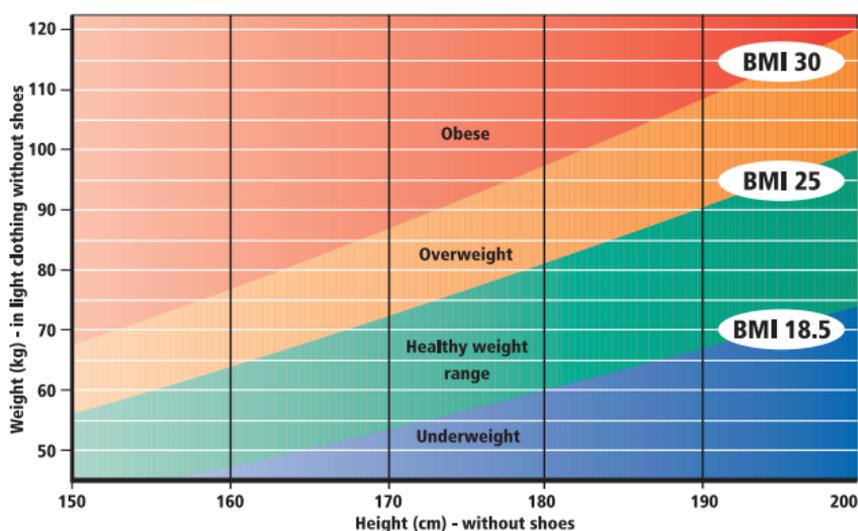
Physical activity is the one area where men outperform women. Still, around four in ten men don't do enough physical activity each day for good health.

Physical activity doesn't have to be very hard to be effective, but vigorous activity offers some additional benefits. If you are not physically active, try gradually increasing the amount of physical activity that you do every day. Aim for at least 30 minutes of moderate activity every day for good health. This can be accumulated in blocks of 10 minutes. Sixty minutes of activity, including some vigorous intensity exercise, is more likely to reduce your cancer risk.

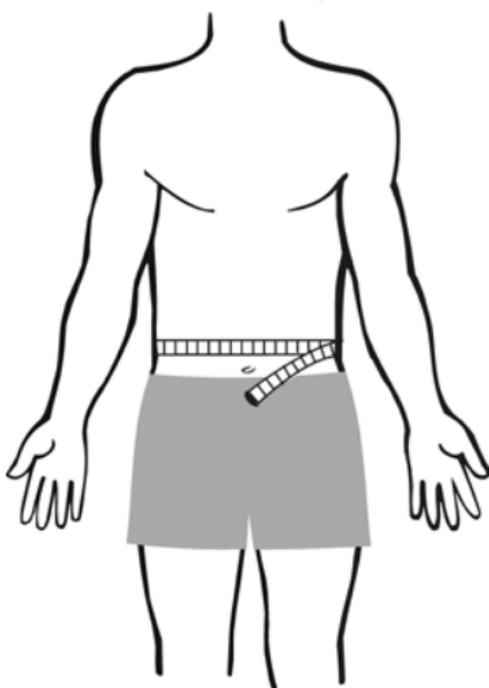
## Stay in shape

Alarming more than 2 out of every 3 men aged 25-64 years are overweight or obese.

If you are overweight the first step is to stop gaining weight. Then try for steady weight loss. Be more physically active and eat according to your energy needs. Aim for a body mass index (BMI) in the healthy weight range between 18.5 and 24.9.



Another useful measure is waist circumference. Men should aim for a waist circumference of less than 94 cm.



## Eat for health

Average energy (calorie, kilojoule) intake for adult men has been steadily increasing over time. Yet more than 80 per cent don't eat enough vegetables for good health and more than half don't eat enough fruit.

A healthy diet, rich in fruit, vegetables, breads, cereals and with a moderate amount of lean meat and dairy foods can reduce your cancer risk.

Men should aim to eat at least 2 serves of fruit and 5 serves of vegetables every day for good health. Fresh fruit and vegetables are the best, but frozen, dried or canned are good alternatives.

It is recommended that men eat at least 5 serves of breads and cereals each day. Try to include a variety of wholegrain foods, which have been shown to be helpful for weight control.

Diets high in red and processed meat increase the risk of bowel cancer. We recommend eating only moderate amounts of red meat, up to 3-4 times a week and limiting consumption of processed meats (eg. salami, bacon and ham). Poultry, seafood, eggs, nuts and legumes are good alternatives to red meat.



# Finding cancer early

## Bowel cancer

When found early, bowel cancer treatment is more successful. Men over 50 should consider being screened for bowel cancer every two years using a faecal occult blood test (FOBT). FOBT detects small traces of blood in bowel motions. People with a positive FOBT result are referred to a specialist for more tests for bowel cancer. Men should talk to their GP about screening for bowel cancer. Some men over 50 will be eligible for the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program.



## **Skin cancer**

Regular skin checks increase your chance of finding skin cancer at an early and highly treatable stage. You should check your whole body, not just areas normally exposed to the sun. If you see a new spot on your skin – one that has changed in size, shape or colour or a non-healing sore – see your doctor as soon as you can.

## **Prostate cancer**

Currently there is no agreed population screening test for prostate cancer. Commonly, the prostate-specific antigen (PSA) test and the digital rectal examination (DRE) are used and find many cancers early. These tests can suggest a man has cancer when he does not (false positive) and may miss cancers (false negative). It is not possible to distinguish between aggressive prostate cancers or those that would do no harm. Finding an aggressive prostate cancer early improves outcomes, but finding an indolent (non-aggressive) prostate cancer early may result in unnecessary treatment. Talk to your GP about the pros and cons of getting tested for prostate cancer.

## **Testicular cancer**

There is no early detection test for testicular cancer. Young men should know what their testicles normally look and feel like and seek medical attention if they notice any changes, particularly new lumps or growth.

## What can men do?

- Stop smoking
- Move your body
- Stay in shape
- Eat for health
- Be SunSmart
- Avoid alcohol
- Talk to your doctor about cancer

For support and information on cancer and cancer-related issues, call Cancer Council Helpline. This is a confidential service. Available Statewide for the cost of a local call Monday to Friday 8 am – 6 pm.

15 Bedbrook Place, Shenton Park WA 6008  
P: (08) 9388 4333 F: (8) 9388 4399



Cancer Council  
**Helpline**

**13 11 20**

[www.cancerwa.asn.au](http://www.cancerwa.asn.au)



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