

# REDUCE THE RISK OF CANCER

## A guide for health professionals ...

Having key messages at hand can be helpful for initiating a brief intervention highlighting practical actions that can reduce cancer risk. This guide provides some key messages to share and signposts to websites which offer additional information.

### Key Actions to Reduce Risk:

#### Stop Smoking

#### Eat Well

#### Be Active

#### Monitoring Drinking

#### Attend Screening & Know the early signs

- **Stop smoking:** Cessation is the number one action for cancer prevention.
- **Eat Well:** Obesity is the largest modifiable factor in cancer development, in non-smokers.
- **Monitor Drinking:** High alcohol intake increases the risk of 7 cancers.
- **Be Active:** Aim for 150 minutes of activity a week.
- **Knowing cancer signs and symptoms and attending screening, improves the likelihood of early detection. Early detection improves treatment options and successful outcomes.**

For more information on the following topic areas or other cancer prevention resources please contact the Information and Resources Centre, Haig House, Cameron Hospital, Leven, Fife, KY8 5RG or online at [www.healthyfife.net/IRC](http://www.healthyfife.net/IRC)

## Smoking Cessation

The benefits of giving up smoking are evident in all age groups, including people of 80 years and older.

Giving up smoking provides both immediate and long-term health benefits from improved blood pressure and lung function to decreased cancer and stroke risk.

### Key Messages

- Smoking is the largest contributing risk factor for all cancers. Smoking at any level can cause serious health issues.
- Stopping smoking provides positive mental health benefits such as reduced anxiety and stress levels.
- The cost of smoking can impact family purse and be a source of stress.
- All stop smoking support is free.
- Contact the Fife Stop Smoking Service on 0800 025 3000. Stop smoking advisors provide advice, support and NRT for anyone who wants to stop smoking.  
*If patients cannot take a phone number, they can complete an internet search for 'NHS Stop Smoking Fife'.*
- All pharmacies and GPs are able to provide stop smoking advice and support.

### Additional support:

- [www.nhsinform.scot/scotlands-service-directory/health-and-wellbeing-services](http://www.nhsinform.scot/scotlands-service-directory/health-and-wellbeing-services)
- [www.nhsinform.scot/stopping-smoking/calculate-my-savings](http://www.nhsinform.scot/stopping-smoking/calculate-my-savings)

## Eat Well

### Healthy Diet

Increasing fibre intake to 30g/day and reducing red and processed meat intake to no more than 70g (cooked weight) per day will decrease the risk of developing colorectal cancer.

### Key Messages

- 5 portions of vegetables and fruit a day will support a healthy diet.
- Eat low processed whole grains (cereals, brown/seeded breads or whole-wheat pasta) and pulses (lentils and beans) most days.

- Swap red and processed meats for dairy, poultry, fish, pulses, vegetables or meat alternatives.
- Small gradual swaps are more effective for positive diet change compared to a complete overhaul.

## Obesity reduction

A BMI above 25 suggests excess fat storage in both men and women, unless they have significant muscle mass.

Remaining at or reducing to a healthy weight significantly reduces the risk of developing cancer.

People who have been told their weight category by a health professional are more likely to practice weight management.

The only way to lose weight is to burn more calories than calories eaten.

## Key Messages

- Alcoholic drinks are calorie dense and a key target for weight management.
- Eating breakfast, limiting 'red labelled' foods and drinking water over sugary drinks are effective ways to control calorie intake.
- Weight loss is best achieved through reducing intake of saturated fat and sugar while increasing physical activity.

## Be Active

Being active is moving to the extent which raises your heart rate so you can talk, but not sing.

Sedentary behaviour is when you move very little if at all, and includes sitting at a desk. Prolonged periods of sedentary behaviour can increase your risk of bowel and ovarian cancer.

## Key Messages

- Aim for 150 minutes of activity per week.
- Increasing activity can be made a lot easier by incorporating it into an established routine (e.g. by walking to work).
- Encourage taking the stairs, getting off the bus a stop early and active travel.
- Advise against prolonged sitting (even at work) – an hour is too long.

## Key websites:

- [www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/food-and-nutrition](http://www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/food-and-nutrition)
- [www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/keeping-active](http://www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/keeping-active)

# Monitor Drinking

There is no risk free level of alcohol use.

Using alcohol increases the risk of developing 7 types of cancer.

## Key Messages

- If consumed at all, limit alcoholic drinks to 14 units per week.
- Avoid binge drinking (drinking more than 8 units in less than 4 hours) as this damages cells in the mouth, throat and bowel.
- Take alcohol free days between drinks.
- Opt for smaller drinks, avoid double measures and alternate between alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks (preferably water).
- Eating a meal while drinking will reduce harm and alcohol consumption.

## Screening

Screening is often the only way to detect the very early signs of cancer.

Early diagnosis means more treatment options and higher survival rates.

Patients should be encouraged to take up screening when it is offered.

More screening information at [www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/screening](http://www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/screening)

