

Health Promotion

Health promotion aims to empower individuals and their communities to make informed, positive health decisions. At Action Cancer our two key health promotion messages are **prevention** and **early detection**.

We deliver these messages across Northern Ireland through a range of health promotion activities and to a variety of settings including schools, workplaces and communities.

Prevention

Up to 50% of certain cancers can be prevented by making small, simple changes to our lifestyle such as: by not smoking, eating a healthy balanced diet, keeping physically active and taking care of our skin in the sun.

Early detection

Being aware of your own body and attending available screening tests can aid early detection of cancer and greatly increase the chance of successful treatment and longer survival.

Healthy Eating

Controlling what we eat and taking regular physical activity helps us to maintain a healthy body weight. This can help improve energy levels, boost self-esteem and improve sleep quality, as well as reducing stress and the risk of many serious illnesses such as breast cancer, colon cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes and depression.



Tips to maintain a balanced diet:

- Avoid sugars and processed foods
- Choose high fibre options (like wholemeal bread) to keep us fuller for longer
- Choose slow release carbohydrates
- Eat regularly - have three main meals every day with healthy snacks in between
- Eat protein with every meal and snack
- Drink plenty of water (6 – 8 glasses is recommended daily)
- Control your portion sizes

- Grilling instead of frying food
- Reduce salt intake
- Avoid foods high in saturated fats and watch out for hidden fats
- Always eat breakfast - it really is the most important meal of the day!

All these small changes can make a big difference!

Physical Activity

Physical activity is any activity, which makes you feel warmer and your heart beat faster. Examples of moderate physical activity include:

- Walking fast
- Water aerobics
- Riding a bike on level ground
- Pushing a lawn mower

Take up an exercise that you really enjoy and can fit into your lifestyle easily. Start off slowly and build it up - you will be surprised how quickly your fitness levels can improve.

How much physical activity?

How much you need to do each week depends on your age. Also, bear in mind that the recommended amount can be broken down throughout the week into manageable 20 – 30 minutes sessions.

Children (5 - 18): At least **60 minutes of moderate physical activity every day**. All children should spend no more than 2 hours per day sitting down being sedentary.

Adults (19+): At least **150 minutes (2 1/2 hours)** of moderate exercise every week.

Food for thought

One fast food burger meal contains 850kcal and would require either 4 hours of walking or 2 hours of running to burn it off!!



Smoking

Smoking is the cause of 85 – 90% of lung cancers. On average there are 900 deaths from lung cancer per year in Northern Ireland. Smoking is also linked to other cancers such as mouth, voice box, throat, nose, liver, breast and bladder. This is because cigarettes contain over 4,000 chemicals, with approximately 70 of them cancer-causing. These include:

- Tar - the sticky substance produced in the lungs
- Formaldehyde - used to preserve dead bodies
- Ammonia - a component of toilet cleaner

Individually these chemicals are dangerous to human health but when combined together in cigarettes and inhaled, they become a lethal combination.

Stopping smoking **will** reduce your risk of developing smoking related cancers. Research shows that quitting at age 50 halves your chances of developing smoking related diseases, while quitting at age 30 almost eliminates your risk. The sooner you quit the better!



Benefits of Quitting

- Reduces risk of some cancers, in particular lung cancer
- Saves money
- Protects the health of those around you
- Improves your general health and fitness

If you are interested in stopping smoking you can find more information at www.want2stop.info Alternatively you can speak with your GP or pharmacist.

For further information, contact the health promotion team on **028 9080 3344** or email healthpromotion@actioncancer.org

Alcohol

Northern Ireland has one of the highest rates of binge drinking in Europe. Regular heavy drinking can damage the liver, brain, heart, kidneys and stomach. There are approximately **five alcohol related deaths in Northern Ireland every week**.

Recommended safe limits of alcohol:

- Men and women: no more than 14 units per week
- Spread your drinking over 3 days or more if you drink as much as 14 units a week.
- Both men and women should have at least two alcohol free days a week.

Fact: Research has found that women who drink 2 – 5 units a day are 41% more likely to get breast cancer than those who don't.

Drinks and units

- 1 x pint of beer = 2.2 units
- 1 x standard glass of wine = 2.1 units
- 1 x bottle of alcopop = 1.5 units



Action Cancer provides...

Early Detection

A breast screening service is available onboard the Big Bus and in Action Cancer House in Belfast. Health checks are also available onboard the Big Bus.

Support Services

Complementary therapy, Counselling and the Listening Ear Service are available for those closely affected by cancer in order to enhance quality of life.

Education

Information on our website and leaflets on cancer prevention and early detection. Our health promotion team delivers talks to schools, workplaces and groups across Northern Ireland.

Action Cancer is Northern Ireland's leading local cancer charity. All of the services we provide are confidential. We depend heavily on public and business donations to keep our services going.

Care in the Sun

In Northern Ireland each year over **3,359 people are diagnosed with skin cancer**. 319 of these diagnoses are malignant melanomas, the more serious skin cancer.

Sunburn occurs when UV rays from the sun damage the skin's cells. This means the cells are at risk of becoming cancerous.



Safe Sun rules:

- Wear sunscreen no lower than SPF15
- Cover up using a hat, t-shirt and sunglasses
- Stay out of the sun between 11am and 3pm - the hottest part of the day
- Never use sunbeds. UV rays from sunbeds can be ten times stronger than the midday sun.

Skin Cancer Signs and Symptoms

A sign of a skin cancer is any change in a mole. Be sure to check your moles once every three months for any changes in **size, shape or colour**.

Size:

When half of the mole does not match the other half

Shape:

If the mole's diameter is larger than a pencil's eraser

Colour:

When the colour of the mole varies throughout

Other:

If it bleeds, itches or oozes or if the border is ragged or irregular

If you spot any changes in your moles contact your GP to get it checked out.

Below are examples of some cancerous moles.



Health Promotion Services

M.O.T. Health Checks incorporate a number of assessments including cholesterol, blood glucose, body composition and blood pressure. Information on cancer signs and symptoms, self-examination and health and lifestyle advice are also provided. These are available on the Big Bus and on request in workplaces and community groups.



Cancer Awareness Sessions are designed to raise awareness of the signs and symptoms of the most common male and female cancers and highlight ways to reduce our risk of developing cancer. They are offered to adults in a variety of workplaces and community settings.

Health Stands offer the chance for our health promotion team to attend functions and health events in the community, schools and workplaces to provide cancer awareness and lifestyle information and advice. This can include the use of visual aids, models and health check resources.



Programmes

Action Cancer offer a range of programmes that provide information on all aspects of healthy living, known to help reduce your risk of developing cancer.



School Programmes

The **Health Action Programmes**, supported by Centra, are designed to improve knowledge of health and encourage pupils to take ownership of their lifestyle choices. There are a range of educational programmes such as 'Centra Live Well Programme' targeting children and young people from an early age, that deliver key health messages in a fun and interactive way.

Community & Workplace Programmes

From Health Checks, where individuals can get information about their own health markers such as blood pressure or body composition, to cancer awareness programmes providing groups with information about specific cancers, these programmes give companies/organisations an opportunity to provide access to specialist healthy living programmes.

Campaigns

Action Man Campaign has a men-only focus and runs every year in June alongside National Men's Health week. The campaign raises awareness of male specific cancers and offers clinics providing MOT health checks and cancer awareness for men.



For further information or to book a session or programme, contact the health promotion team on **028 9080 3344** or email healthpromotion@actioncancer.org