

# Empowering Communities to Promote Equity in Cancer Risk Reduction, Screening and Early Diagnosis

Our collective aims are:

- To increase awareness and engagement in things we can change about cancer risk.
- That those who wish to participate in screening can do so in an equitable and accessible way.
- To raise awareness of the potential signs and symptoms of cancer and encourage people to seek medical care without delay if they develop signs or symptoms.

If you are working in the community as a healthcare worker or a community worker, you can be an advocate for cancer risk reduction, screening and early diagnosis. Each of these plays an important role in reducing the impact of cancer for people in our communities. For more information on health inequities click [here](#).

This tool will provide practical information to support you in your role and link you to more information. We can all play a role in reducing health inequities in our community.

# Cancer risk reduction

Each individual's risk of getting cancer is influenced by a wide range of factors. Things that we can't change (like our age or genetics) and things that we can change (like what we eat, whether we drink alcohol, exercise, protect our skin from the sun).

Everyone can take steps to reduce their risk of cancer.

## National Survey on Cancer Awareness and Attitudes

The HSE National Cancer Control Programme (NCCP) published the first National Survey on Cancer Awareness and Attitudes, September 2022. The research survey was conducted amongst a representative sample of 2,874 adults aged 18+ living in Ireland. The survey shows high levels of awareness that tobacco smoking and unprotected sun exposure can cause cancer. However, there are lower levels of awareness of the cancer risk associated with alcohol consumption, dietary factors, physical activity, body weight, breastfeeding, infection (e.g. HPV, hepatitis), medication (e.g. HRT and the contraceptive pill) and medical conditions (e.g. having Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) is associated with an increased risk of lung cancer).

Download the report by clicking [here](#).

Watch the webinar presentation on the report by clicking [here](#).

## Reducing Cancer Risk: E-learning Programme

The HSE National Cancer Control Programme has developed a free e-learning programme on 'Reducing Cancer Risk' for health and social care professionals. The programme consists of short course modules on modifiable cancer risk factors. Each module takes 10-15 mins to complete and covers:

- How the modifiable risk factor affects cancer risk
- What cancers the risk factor can cause
- Cancer risk reduction advice
- Signposts to supports and reliable sources of information.

These modules are available on [www.hseland.ie](http://www.hseland.ie), and include modules on tobacco, alcohol, skin protection, screening, body weight, eating for health, physical activity, vaccinations, radon, breastfeeding, HRT and workplace.

## Supporting your community

- We have a range of cancer risk reduction resources at [www.hse.ie/cancerprevention](http://www.hse.ie/cancerprevention).
- You can order cancer risk reduction resources from [www.healthpromotion.ie](http://www.healthpromotion.ie). Select 'Cancer' under the 'search by topic' tab to view and order resources.
- Download the Irish Cancer Prevention Network '[Reduce your risk of cancer booklet](#)'
- Download NCCPs [Cancer Prevention Awareness Calender 2024](#)
- Sign up to the Irish Cancer Prevention Network ezine and updates by visiting [www.irishcancerpreventionnetwork.com](http://www.irishcancerpreventionnetwork.com)
- Watch cancer risk reduction webinars and videos on the [NCCP YouTube channel](#).

## Cancer risk reduction resources



### Smoking cessation

- [Reduce your cancer risk icon: Smoking](#)
- [Being smoke free can reduce your risk of cancer poster](#)
- [Being smoke free can reduce your risk of cancer poster: male cancers](#)
- [Being smoke free can reduce your risk of cancer poster: female cancers](#)
- [It's never too late to quit smoking female leaflet](#)
- [It's never too late to quit smoking male leaflet](#)
- [It's never too late to quit smoking couple leaflet](#)



### Physical activity

- [Reduce your cancer risk icon: Physical activity](#)
- [Physical activity can reduce your risk of cancer poster](#)
- [Physical activity can reduce your risk of cancer poster: male cancers](#)
- [Physical activity can reduce your risk of cancer poster: female cancers](#)



### Healthy eating

- [Reduce your cancer risk icon: Healthy Eating](#)



### Alcohol

- [Reduce your cancer risk icon: Alcohol](#)
- [Drinking less can reduce your risk of cancer](#)
- [Drinking less can reduce your risk of cancer: male cancers](#)
- [Drinking less can reduce your risk of cancer: female cancers](#)



### Radon

- [Reduce your cancer risk icon: Radon](#)



### Breastfeeding

- [Reduce your cancer risk icon: Breastfeeding](#)



### Body weight

- [Reduce your cancer risk icon: Body Weight](#)
- [Maintaining a healthy body weight can reduce your risk of cancer poster](#)
- [Maintaining a healthy body weight can reduce your risk of cancer poster: male cancers](#)
- [Maintaining a healthy body weight can reduce your risk of cancer poster: female cancers](#)



### Vaccinations – HPV, hepatitis

- [Reduce your cancer risk icon: Vaccines](#)



### Workplace

- [Reduce your cancer risk icon: Work Place](#)



### Skin protection

- [Reduce your cancer risk icon: Skin Protection](#)
- [HSE SunSmart 5 S's poster](#)
- [SunSmart for Everyone video](#)
- [Playing Outdoor Skin Protection for kids](#)
- [SunSmart Outdoor workers infographic](#)
- [Visit \[www.hse.ie/SunSmart\]\(http://www.hse.ie/SunSmart\) for more resources](#)



### Hormones

- [Reduce your cancer risk icon: Hormones](#)

Contact [prevention@cancercontrol.ie](mailto:prevention@cancercontrol.ie) for support and information.

Visit [www.healthpromotion.ie](http://www.healthpromotion.ie) to order hardcopies of resources.

# Screening

## What is screening?

- Screening programmes aim to detect pre-disease or early stage disease before any symptoms have developed, so that timely diagnosis and early treatment can be offered.
- People are offered screening when they do not have any signs and symptoms of the condition they are being screened for.
- For most people their screening test result will be normal/negative.
- This means that they have a lower chance of developing the condition that was screened for, until their next screening test is due.
- Some people will have a positive/abnormal screening test result.
- These people may have a higher chance of having the condition they are being screened for. They will be offered further tests or treatment if necessary.

## Screening Programmes



	Age	Test	Frequency
	Women aged 50-69 years	Breast x-ray (mammogram)	Every 2 years
	Women and people with a cervix 25-65 years	HPV (human papillomavirus) cervical screening test	Every 3 years 25-29 years Every 5 years 30-65 years
	Men and women 59-69 years  The age range of BowelScreen is changing. This will make the free home screening programme available to more people. To find out if you can take part visit <a href="http://www.bowelscreen.ie">www.bowelscreen.ie</a>	Faecal Immunochemical Test (home test)	Every 2 years
	All people with Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes over 12 years of age	Eye screening (specialised digital photography)	Every 1 or 2 years depending on previous results

## How to support your community?

- Remind people that screening services are free and any follow-up is free
- Provide easy-read materials for each programme:
  - [BreastCheck](#)
  - [BowelScreen](#)
  - [Diabetic RetinaScreen](#)
  - [CervicalCheck](#)
- Let people know they can request accessible materials – please contact us for audio, Braille, email, large font etc.  
[health.promotion@screeningservice.ie](mailto:health.promotion@screeningservice.ie)
- Signpost to access officers – these are a point of contact for each programme for disabled people (details below)
- Contact the health promotion team – people/communities can request information and support from the health promotion team  
[health.promotion@screeningservice.ie](mailto:health.promotion@screeningservice.ie)
- Request translators – we provide language and Irish Sign Language (ISL) interpreters for screening services  
[health.promotion@screeningservice.ie](mailto:health.promotion@screeningservice.ie)

## Useful Videos

### Multilingual Videos

- [BowelScreen videos in multiple languages](#)
- [BreastCheck videos in multiple languages](#)
- [CervicalCheck videos in multiple languages](#)
- [Diabetic RetinaScreen videos in multiple languages](#)

### CervicalCheck

- [How effective is HPV cervical screening](#)
- [What is cervical screening](#)
- [HPV vaccination explained](#)
- [HPV vaccine – why get it](#)

## BreastCheck Videos

- [Going for a mammogram – a photostory video](#)

## BowelScreen

- [Doing your FIT test](#)
- [What is a colonoscopy?](#)

## Diabetic RetinaScreen

- [About HSE Diabetic RetinaScreen](#)
- [Going for an appointment](#)

## Leaflets

You can order NSS leaflets from [www.healthpromotions.ie](http://www.healthpromotions.ie) using the key words 'screening'.

## BreastCheck

- [Important information about your breast screening](#)
- [Breast cancer prevention and early detection information for the screened population](#)

## CervicalCheck

- [Sample multilingual CervicalCheck information sheets and screening forms](#)
- [Important information about your HPV screening](#)

## BowelScreen

- [Important information About Bowel Screening](#)

## Diabetic RetinaScreen

- [About Diabetic Retinopathy Screening](#)

## NSS Four Programme Factsheet

- [NSS Four Programme Factsheet](#)

## E-learning module

- Cancer Screening

This is a 15 minute e-learning module on screening and the three cancer screening programmes.

Search for 'Reducing Cancer Risk' on [HSELand](#) to access this module.

- Diabetic RetinaScreen

This is a 15 minute e-learning module on helping people on their screening journey for Diabetic RetinaScreen.

Search for 'Diabetic RetinaScreen' on [HSELand](#) to access this module.

## Link to registers

- [BreastCheck](#)

- [CervicalCheck](#)

- [BowelScreen](#)

- Diabetic RetinaScreen – your GP/Practice nurse/health professional can refer you to Diabetic RetinaScreen or [click](#).

## Emails/Phone number

- BreastCheck – [info@breastcheck.ie](mailto:info@breastcheck.ie)

- CervicalCheck – [info@cervicalcheck.ie](mailto:info@cervicalcheck.ie)

- BowelScreen – [info@bowelscreen.ie](mailto:info@bowelscreen.ie)

- Diabetic RetinaScreen – [info@retinascreen.ie](mailto:info@retinascreen.ie)

## Freephone number 1800 45 45 55

## Websites

- [BreastCheck](#)

- [CervicalCheck](#)

- [BowelScreen](#)

- [Diabetic RetinaScreen](#)

- [National Screening Service](#)

## Health Promotion Team

To collaborate and share learning contact the health promotion team  
[health.promotion@screeningservice.ie](mailto:health.promotion@screeningservice.ie)

## Contact access officers

- [access@breastcheck.ie](mailto:access@breastcheck.ie)

- [access@bowelscreen.ie](mailto:access@bowelscreen.ie)

- [access@diabeticretinascreen.ie](mailto:access@diabeticretinascreen.ie)

- [info@cervicalcheck.ie](mailto:info@cervicalcheck.ie)

## Useful reports

- [Equity reports](#)

In your role, you can:

- Make sure people are aware of the different screening programmes available.
- Encourage people to read the information sent to them carefully.
- Proactively ask people if they have taken part, and encourage them to participate even if previous screening results have been normal.
- Be prepared to answer questions on screening and be sensitive to the barriers that might exist.
- Ensure any barriers to participation are minimised where possible.
- Know how to register people or support them to register.
- Know the signs and symptoms of cancer and advise people with signs or symptoms to seek medical advice without delay. E.g. someone with a breast lump should talk to their GP without delay.
- Provide practical information to people i.e. they can change the date/time of their BreastCheck appointment if it doesn't suit, they can go to any sample taker for cervical screening, they can ring the Freephone number if they have any questions.
- Supports are available including interpreters and easy read materials.
- If an individual has taken up an offer of screening: check the screening process has been completed, help explain screening results, encourage attendance at any follow-up appointments.
- Advise people to contact their GP if they are concerned about their personal risk of cancer.

# Early diagnosis of cancer

Early diagnosis aims to find cancer early among people with signs or symptoms. If cancer is found early, before it has grown bigger or spread to other parts of the body, it's easier to treat and there's a better chance of cure and recovery.

## What are the signs and symptoms to look out for?

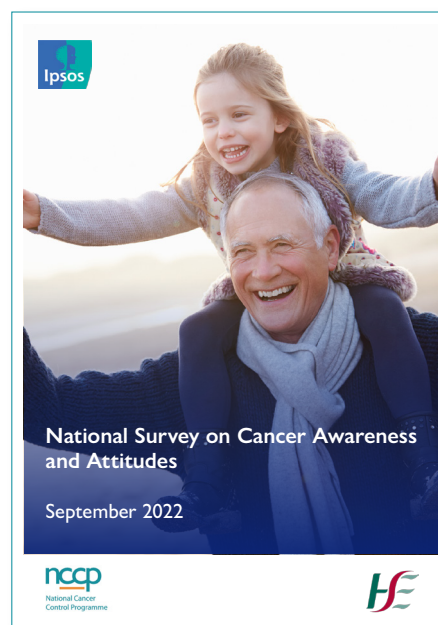
- A new lump or bump on your body, e.g. a lump in your breast, armpit, testicle, head or neck
- A changing lump or bump on your body
- Unexplained bleeding from any part of your body, e.g. coughing up blood-stained phlegm; blood in your poo or pee; vaginal bleeding between your usual periods or after the menopause
- Changes on your skin, e.g. a new or changing mole
- Unexplained weight loss or appetite loss
- Feeling very tired all the time, more than is normal for you
- Unexplained bruising
- A new cough lasting three weeks or more
- An ongoing change to a cough that you have had for a long time, e.g. the cough is getting worse
- An ongoing change to your usual bowel or bladder habits, e.g. blood in your poo or pee, looser poo or constipation
- Ongoing heartburn, indigestion or difficulty swallowing
- Unexplained or persistent pain

## National Survey on Cancer Awareness and Attitudes

The NCCP National Survey on Cancer Attitudes and Awareness showed that many people in Ireland can't name common signs and symptoms of cancer. For example, less than 1 in 3 adults (30%) named 'coughing up blood' or 'a change in your bowel habit' as potential signs of cancer.

Improving knowledge of cancer signs and symptoms is important because people who can recognise potential signs/symptoms of cancer, and who seek early medical intervention, are generally more likely to have less advanced disease and better prospects for treatment (National Cancer Strategy 2017-2026).

Download the report by clicking [here](#).





## How to support your community?

Know the potential early signs and symptoms of cancer and encourage people in your community to contact their GP without delay if they have signs/symptoms.

We have a range of early diagnosis of cancer resources to download at [www.hse.ie/cancerearlydetection](http://www.hse.ie/cancerearlydetection).

You can order hardcopies of some resources from [www.healthpromotion.ie](http://www.healthpromotion.ie). Select 'Cancer' under the 'search by topic' tab to view and order resources.

## Posters

- [Know the signs of cancer poster](#)
- [Know the signs of breast cancer poster](#)
- [Know the signs of bowel cancer poster](#)
- [Know the signs of lung cancer poster](#)
- [Know the signs of cervical cancer poster](#)
- [Know the signs of melanoma skin cancer poster](#)
- [Know the signs of prostate cancer](#)

## Fact sheets

- [Prostate cancer](#)
- [Female breast cancer](#)
- [Lung cancer](#)
- [Head and neck cancers](#)
- [Testicular cancer](#)

## Videos

- [Know the signs spot cancer early \(female\)](#)
- [Know the sign spot cancer early \(male\)](#)
- [Know the signs spot lung cancer early](#)

## E-learning module

The National Cancer Control Programme (NCCP) has developed an Early Diagnosis of Cancer e-learning programme to provide healthcare staff with the knowledge and resources required to help improve the early diagnosis of cancer in Ireland.

Available now on HSeLanD, the new eLearning programme 'Early Diagnosis of Cancer' provides information on how to recognise signs and symptoms of cancer and guide people, when necessary, to the appropriate next step in their journey to a possible cancer diagnosis.

The new e-learning programme contains 2 modules:

- Early Diagnosis of Cancer – Part 1 (lung, breast, prostate and melanoma skin cancer)
- Early Diagnosis of Cancer – Part 2 (colorectal, uterine, ovarian and cervical cancer)

Visit [www.hseland.ie](http://www.hseland.ie) and search for 'Early Diagnosis of Cancer' to access the modules.

For more information or support please visit or contact us on:

Website: [www.hse.ie/cancerearlydetection](http://www.hse.ie/cancerearlydetection)

E-mail: [prevention@cancercontrol.ie](mailto:prevention@cancercontrol.ie)

### Know the signs Find Cancer Early

1 in 2 people in Ireland will develop cancer in their lifetime.  
Treatment options and survival rates are better than ever – especially when cancer is found early.

Call your GP TODAY if you notice any of the following

- A new lump/bump on your body
- A changing lump/bump on your body
- Unexplained bleeding
- Changes on your skin, e.g. a new or changing mole
- Unexplained weight loss
- Feeling very tired all the time, more than is normal for you
- A new cough lasting for more than 3 weeks
- A change in your bowel habit for more than 6 weeks, such as looser poo, pooing more often or constipation
- Persistent heartburn or indigestion

Don't be scared Don't delay  
Call your GP today

Visit [www.hse.ie/cancerearlydetection](http://www.hse.ie/cancerearlydetection) for more information

### Know the signs Find Bowel Cancer Early

Approximately 2,700 people are diagnosed with bowel cancer each year in Ireland.  
Treatment options and survival rates are better than ever – especially when bowel cancer is found early.

Call your GP TODAY if you notice any of the following

- A change in your bowel habit for more than 6 weeks, such as looser poo, pooing more often or constipation
- Feeling like you need to pass a bowel motion even when you know your bowel is empty
- Unexplained bleeding from your back passage
- Unexplained pain in your tummy or back passage
- Unexplained lump or swelling in your tummy
- Unexplained weight loss
- Feeling very tired all the time, more than is normal for you
- Breathlessness more than is normal for you

Don't be scared Don't delay  
Call your GP today

Visit [www.hse.ie/cancerearlydetection](http://www.hse.ie/cancerearlydetection) for more information

### Female Breast Cancer

#### Early detection is vital

Breast cancer is the most common invasive cancer in women in Ireland.  
Prevention and early detection of breast cancer is crucial to protect and improve your health.

**Detect Breast cancer early**  
If breast cancer is found early, your chances of survival are much better than if it is picked up late.  
Contact your doctor **without delay** if you have any of the following signs or symptoms:

- A new lump in either of your breasts
- A new lump in either of your armpits
- A change in the size or shape of one or both breasts
- Bloodstained or watery discharge from either of your nipples
- Dimpling on the skin of your breasts (looks like orange peel)
- A rash on or around your nipple
- A change in the appearance of your nipple, such as the nipple flattening into your breast
- An abscess (infected boil) in your breast

Breast pain on its own is not usually a symptom of breast cancer. You can read more about breast pain on [www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie).

For tips to reduce your risk of breast cancer, see the other side of this page.