Staying well and preventing cancer: Facilitator’s guide

To accompany the Staying well and preventing cancer flipchart

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Introduction to the flipchart

The purpose of the *Staying well and preventing cancer flipchart* is to empower participants to learn about how to prevent cancer through healthy living behaviour change. The purpose of this facilitator’s guide is to assist community educators to prepare and deliver flipchart education sessions.

Who is the flipchart for?

The information in the flipchart is for adults from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. There is a plain English flipchart and it is also being translated into community languages. Find out what languages are available at cancer.nsw.gov.au/about-cancer/document-library/staying-well-and-preventing-cancer-community-educa.

This guide has been developed to prepare and support the facilitator delivering the community education session.

Who can facilitate the session?

The flipchart can be delivered by any community bilingual worker with an interest in healthy living or cancer. If the language most relevant to your community of interest is not yet available, then it may still be helpful to use the plain English flipchart to present the illustrations.

Ideally the facilitator has experience delivering training in community settings and is supported by their local health district (LHD), so they can refer participants to health professionals for further information and support.

A culturally competent facilitator will be aware of any sensitive subjects or cultural considerations and be able to handle any issues that arise, either alone or with support. Additional information is provided in the Frequently asked questions (FAQ) section to help with any tricky questions.

The flipchart is written in plain English so that it can be interpreted easily. It has been translated into a small number of community languages. These translations can be downloaded from the Cancer Institute NSW website cancer.nsw.gov.au/about-cancer/document-library/staying-well-and-preventing-cancer-community-educa or obtained via your LHD Multicultural Service. The pictures are designed to help the educator by illustrating the key points of each page.
Time to deliver the session

The flipchart contains a lot of information. Please use the flipchart and facilitators guide in a way that best suits your group.

Ideally the information is delivered over four hours including a 20-minute break and short stretch breaks. Four hours allows time for people to ask questions and share their experiences, which helps the learning process. If possible, deliver the information over two sessions of two hours each so that there is more time for discussion and activities. Two separate sessions provides a break for participants to think about the information and return for session two with feedback and further questions.

If you only have a shorter amount of time to present the flipchart, you can focus on specific sections based on participants’ interests. Then, if the group is interested in learning more, you could schedule further sessions. You may want to choose this option if you are following up with the Cancer Institute NSW’s Breast health and breast screening flipchart, Bowel health and screening flipchart and/or Cervical screening – taking care of your health flipchart sessions.

Please make yourself available after the session for any additional questions. You could stay with the group at the venue or stay online after the session for 20 minutes, or you could share your email address or phone number with participants.

Common barriers to talking about cancer

Cancer affects many Australians, and it may have affected workshop participants or their family members. Therefore, some of the content may trigger sadness, anxiety or other emotions. It is important to acknowledge this as part of your session introduction and let participants know they can take a break if needed.

Participants may have a range of beliefs and experiences about cancer. For example, some people think that cancer is incurable and/or pre-determined by fate, karma or God/s. They may believe nothing they do will make a difference to whether they will get cancer or not. However there are a range of factors that have been proven to influence a person’s risk of cancer. For these sessions, it is important to increase participants’ knowledge about the evidence, which shows there are things that people can do to reduce their risk of cancer.

Practising healthy living behaviours does not guarantee good health for life, but is an excellent way to keep as healthy as possible. We recommend that groups also take part in cancer screening education sessions (breast, bowel and cervical screening) to explore how to find cancer early so that it can be treated effectively.
Getting ready for your session

Delivery mode

The session content can be delivered online or face to face:


  *It is recommended to use the online presentation so that you know the information is up to date. Plus with the online version you can use the hyperlinks to show further information on support services or to help answer participant questions.*

- A printed flipchart that you can request to loan from your LHD Multicultural Health Service or via email to information@cancer.nsw.gov.au.

Information session checklist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITY</th>
<th>(Tick)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organiser/coordinator</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Organise the facilitator, interpreter if needed, and any other speakers/contributors you wish to invite.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Facilitator</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Read through the facilitator’s guide, the flipchart and look at some of the additional information sources to prepare for the session.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Talk to your training coordinator/manager and LHD about support for participants. Check what primary care or general practice services are available in your area that bulk bill and also for non-residents.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Plan to deliver the content over two sessions. Discuss with your coordinator if there will be further healthy living or cancer screening workshops for the group.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Prepare for activities and plan when to take breaks.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Select the group, date and time</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Find and learn about group members. Consider participant availability.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• Consider whether there is an existing community event or group that could incorporate the healthy living session.
• Consider the time of the session. Some participants may have family responsibilities, for example needing to pick up children or grandchildren from school.
• Is it possible to arrange childcare for parents and carers attending the session?
• Consider the gender make up – is there a preference for male only or female only groups?
• Are there any cultural or religious key dates when the session is being planned, i.e. is it a fasting period?
• Will you deliver the workshop online or face to face? It is usually easier to have everyone online or everyone present in the room rather than a mix of both. If online you will need to make the meeting link and any other resources about how to participate in online training available to your group before the workshop starts.

**Book the venue**
• Consider number of participants, accessibility of location, i.e. proximity to public transport and parking availability.
• Consider availability of audiovisual resources, internet connection, laptop and data projector if required, as well as access to a kitchen.
• Decide if you will make the session available online.

**Promote**
• Promote the session to the community (i.e. using a bilingual promotional flyer distributed by your existing networks or more broadly on community noticeboards, etc.)

**Travel**
• Consider travel issues, including organising travel for participants or changing location or providing the session online if necessary.

**Catering**
• Organise catering if required.

**Resources**
• Handouts and resources for activities
• Are there physical examples of foods you can use to illustrate the information? E.g. a plate showing serving size of different foods?
• Whiteboard and/or butcher’s paper and removeable adhesive
• Whiteboard marker pens and eraser, pens and pencils
• Name tags
• Paper for notes
• Sign in sheet to collect names and contact details of participants
Evaluation

- Photocopy the evaluation form at the end of this resource for participants to complete. We also encourage you to evaluate the session from a facilitator’s point of view.

Provide any completed evaluation forms, feedback or community insights to the Cancer Institute NSW at CINSW-Prevention@health.nsw.gov.au.

On the day

Set up the room or prepare to connect online.

Now everything is ready – enjoy the session!

Flipchart pages with notes for the facilitator

Part 1

Starting the session

For an online session remind people to mute themselves when not talking and to use the chat function for any questions or comments.

Acknowledge the traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owners of the land/s on which the training takes place. Suggested wording:

I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which we live, and recognise their continuing connection to land, water and community. I pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging.
For users of this flipchart

The flipchart has two sections:

**Part 1** explains how cancer is linked to healthy living behaviours then provides further information on healthy eating, being more active and staying a healthy weight.

**Part 2** provides information on stopping smoking, avoiding alcohol and protecting skin from UV radiation. It also provides information on participating in cancer screening.

**Contributors:**
The Cancer Institute NSW gratefully acknowledges the significant contributions of the Multicultural and Health Promotion teams at South Western Sydney LHD, Western Sydney LHD and Sydney LHD, especially the bilingual community educators and the coordinators, in the development of this resource.
Reduce your risk of cancer

**Facilitator notes:**

Wellness and good health can mean:

- spending time with your family and friends
- preparing and eating food together
- not being sick
- having a job and providing for your family
- feeling safe to go out into your community and at home
- sleeping well
- having a healthy mind/good mental health.

**Discussion:**

*Discuss one of these questions:*

- Tell us about a time when you felt in the best of health? (Write what people say on a whiteboard or butcher’s paper) OR
- How does your family’s health affect you?
Facilitator notes:

- Cancer is the leading cause of premature death and illness in NSW.
- Cancer has a major impact on individuals, their families and the healthcare system.
- One in two Australians develop cancer and one in five die from cancer in their lifetime.
  - This doesn’t mean half of this workshop group will get cancer.
  - People who smoke, drink alcohol and are overweight won’t always get cancer.
  - Cancer can be treated and treatment is improving all the time. Survival rates are high in NSW.
  - Many cancers can be cured if found early.
- If you live in a healthy way there is less risk of cancer – but you may still get cancer.
  - This is why cancer screening is so important – to pick it up early.
  - If you live in a healthy way, there is less chance of other diseases as well, like diabetes and heart disease.

Discussion:
Discuss one of these questions:

- What do you think causes cancer?
- How many people know someone in their community with experience of cancer?
- Have you participated in a cancer information workshop before?
There are many causes of cancer. Some can be avoided. What you and your family eat, drink and do can affect your risk of getting cancer.

Facilitator notes:

- Some risk factors can be changed by changing your behaviour.
- Some risk factors can be changed by personal behaviour change and others can’t be, for example:
  - inherited genetic problems/mistakes can be a factor in a range of cancers
  - your age – older people are more likely to experience cancer than younger people
  - exposure to cancer-causing substances including asbestos and cadmium.
- What you and your family eat, drink and do can increase or decrease the risk of cancer.
- It’s not too late to change your routine to be more healthy.
Facilitator notes:

- With information and support you can make changes to your behaviours and habits and reduce risk of cancer.
- Over time you can add more healthy behaviours – you don’t have to change everything at once.
- Making changes can be hard so look for support.
- Mental health issues can make healthy living changes hard. However smoking, not exercising, not eating well and not sleeping can make mental health issues worse.
- It’s important to talk to your doctor about your health. In NSW there are many excellent health services available.
- There are six healthy living choices that can reduce your risk. We will look at those now.
Eat healthy

There is a lot more information to share about healthy eating and active living. There are training materials available in the Further Information section. And these health eating webpages give a lot more information about different foods. cancer.nsw.gov.au/eat-healthy.

Eat healthy foods

The food you and your family eat makes a big difference to your health.

Facilitator notes:

- The ingredients in food are important and also the cooking method. Grilling and steaming uses less fat than frying and roasting. Use spices to add flavour and lower the amount of salt.
- Dairy foods have also been shown to reduce the risk of bowel cancer.
- Supplements aren’t necessary if you follow the Australian Guide to Healthy Eating eatforhealth.gov.au/guidelines unless they are recommended by a health professional.
- If someone in the group has a health condition, they should follow their doctor’s advice. The information below may not be correct.

Discussion:
What makes it easier or harder to prepare healthy food at home? (Write up what people say on a white board or butcher’s paper)
Facilitator notes:

- Processed foods and sauces are often high in salt.
- Food and drinks with high fat and sugar have more kilojoules or calories than fruit, vegetables, legumes and grains. This can lead to overweight and obesity.
- Fibre is food material that can’t be broken down in the gut. It helps keep the gut healthy as it moves through.
Facilitator notes:

- Many people don’t eat the recommended amounts of vegetables, but it’s easy to add more to your diet.
- A ‘serving’ is a standardised way of referring to portions of different types of foods.
- The number of servings on the slides apply to adults 19-50 years of age. More information about serves per day for other ages is available from eatforhealth.gov.au.
- There are lots of ideas about how to increase the amount of vegetables you eat at https://www.cancer.nsw.gov.au/eat-healthy.
- Fruit and vegetables contain fibre that helps you feel full (so you eat less) and substances that can destroy cancer-causing agents (like antioxidants).
- It’s ok to eat frozen and canned vegetables that don’t contain added salt (sodium).

Discussion:
What are some ways to include more vegetables in your diet? (E.g. Make a dip out of spiced roast vegetables, or add grated or finely diced vegetables to stews, curries, fritters, etc.)
Facilitator notes:

- Fruit provides important vitamins and minerals
- Fruit is a good source of fibre in your diet
- One serve of fruit is 150g (e.g. a small banana or an apple)
- Having fruit visible in your kitchen is a good reminder to eat more fruit
- Fruit that is in season will usually be cheaper.
- It’s ok to eat canned fruit in natural juice (not syrup).

Discussion:
Is fresh fruit eaten at family gatherings and events? Cutting up fruit encourages children to eat it – does this work for adults?
**Facilitator notes:**
- Legumes are the seeds of plants that can be eaten fresh, canned or dried (after soaking and cooking).
- Legumes are a vegetable and are also a source of protein. They can be rich in protein and fibre. Protein is important to build bones, muscles, skin and blood.
- Examples include lentils, soya beans, white or red beans and chickpeas.
Facilitator notes:
- A diet with fibre provided by 4-6 serves of wholemeal and whole grain foods per day can help prevent 1 in 6 bowel cancer cases.
- Adults up to 50 years of age should eat 6 serves of mostly whole grain cereals and wholemeal foods every day.
  Adults between the ages of 50-70 years should eat 4-6 serves every day.
  Adults over 70 years of age need less food so should eat 3 serves per day.

Discussion:
What whole grain or wholemeal food do you look for at the market?
Processed meat and too much red meat can increase your risk of cancer. Processed meat is meat that has been cured/preserved, such as salami, prosciutto, ham, bacon and mortadella. Avoid or reduce how much you eat.

Salted fermented fish can increase your risk of cancer too.

Avoided or eat less:

- too much red meat
- processed meat
- salted and fermented fish

Facilitator notes:

- Processed meats are a type 1 carcinogen which means they are known to cause cancer. (More information below.)
- Avoid salted fish that is prepared with salt and is allowed to ferment. Research is clear that Cantonese style salted fish increases cancer risk. More research is needed into other salted fermented fish products.
- It is advised not to eat any foods preserved by salting.
- Including dairy foods in your diet protects against bowel cancer and lowers the risk of breast cancer (pre-menopause). However, there is also evidence that suggests dairy can increase the risk of prostate cancer.
Facilitator notes:

- Red meat including beef, lamb, pork and goat have been classified as Group 2A carcinogen which means it probably causes cancer. That’s why it is better to eat meat less often.
- Cooking meat on the BBQ can increase burning of the meat/charring which increases risk of cancer.
- Fish, other seafood, chicken, eggs, nuts, seeds and tofu are other good sources of protein.
- If someone doesn’t eat meat or other animal foods, it is important to ensure they are getting enough protein, Vitamin B12, iron, zinc, calcium and omega 3 fatty acids.
- It is not yet clear whether vegetarians are at less risk of cancer. A vegetarian diet can be high in fat and sugar. It is very important vegetarians participate in cancer screening.

Discussion:

- How often does your family or community eat meat? Discuss how people feel about meat.
- Do people eat more or less meat than they used to?
Facilitator notes:

- Physical inactivity (being sedentary which means sitting too much) is one of the top four biggest causes of cancer in Australia.
- Sitting less and moving more cuts your risk of cancer.
- There is evidence that exercise may help stop some cancers, like breast cancer, from returning.
- One hour of moderate activity (heart beats a bit faster) or 30 minutes or more vigorous exercise (makes your heart beat faster and you breathe more rapidly) is recommended every day.
- Exercise moves waste and cancer-causing toxins out of your body more quickly.
- Exercise also strengthens the immune system to prevent cancer cells growing.
- Moving your body moves your mood, helping you feel better.
- It’s okay to start with a small amount of activity and build up to more.
Facilitator notes:
- There are many ways you can add more activity while you go about your day:
  - take the bus rather than driving
  - park further away from the shops
  - play with the kids rather than watching
  - mow the lawns
  - start a walking group
  - Other ideas? See https://www.cancer.nsw.gov.au/be-more-active
- Vigorous exercise includes jogging, aerobics, football, netball or boxing.
- Get help from a health professional if you are starting vigorous exercise after a break.

Activity:
Do a simple activity with the group during the break or at the end of the session. A 20-minute walk outside or taking the stairs instead of the lift to leave the building, for example. It’s also a good idea to encourage people to stand up and stretch between each topic.
Stay a healthy weight

Facilitator notes:

- Staying at a healthy weight can help reduce the risk of breast cancer (in women after menopause), as well as bowel, kidney, liver, endometrial, ovarian, stomach, oesophagus, gall bladder, pancreas and (advanced) prostate cancer.
- Your healthy weight range and ideal healthy weight is individual to you. Your doctor will help you work out a healthy weight for you.
- Measure your waist to find out if your weight is affecting your health. Increased risk is over 94cm or more for men, and 80cm or more for women. Greatly increased risk is 102cm or more for men and 88cm or more for women. Check with your doctor if this is an accurate guide for you.
- BMI (body mass index) is a way of seeing if you are overweight for your height. It can be measured using a BMI calculator. Use it as a guide only as BMI can be influenced by gender, age and ethnicity.
- More information including a BMI calculator is available at cancer.nsw.gov.au/maintain-a-healthy-weight.
- These measures are not relevant during pregnancy.
Facilitator notes:

- We all need some fats in our diet. Limit the amount of saturated fats you eat including butter, fat from meat, whole milk cheeses and foods with hydrogenated oils in the ingredient list. Unsaturated fats from plants, such as olive oil and canola oil, and oily fish, which contains omega 3, are healthier. (Find more information on food labelling and illustrated examples in the Frequently asked questions section below.)
- There are many benefits of eating healthier and being more active to lose weight, including meeting new friends, clearing your mind, feeling happier, and sleeping better.
- Trying to lose weight can be challenging.
- Sometimes people lose weight on a diet and then regain it quickly. Ask for support or coaching if you need it, so it is a sustainable change. Call the Get Healthy Service at Ph. 1300 806 258 or find out more at gethealthynsw.com.au.
Part 2

Smoking

Facilitator notes:
- Tobacco smoking is the largest cause of preventable ill health and death in NSW.
- Smoking is known to cause 16 different types of cancer.
- Someone who smokes and who doesn’t quit loses 10 years of their life on average.
- Inhaling someone else’s smoke is harmful, this is called second-hand smoke.
- The smoke inhaled in an hour-long waterpipe/shisha session is estimated to be the equivalent of smoking between 100 and 200 cigarettes. More information at shishanothanks.org.au.
- The smoking of non-tobacco products in a waterpipe is also not safe. The smoke contains highly toxic substances. The addition of fruit flavouring and sweeteners does not reduce the harmful effects of the smoke. Using a waterpipe also increases the risk of sharing coughs, colds, flus and other viruses.
- E-cigarettes (also known as vaping) are battery-operated devices that heat up a liquid to turn it into a vapour, which is inhaled. The liquid contains a mix of chemicals, including toxic chemicals, so they are harmful.
Facilitator notes:
- People can find it hard to give up smoking but support is available.
- Use of tobacco over time can cause a physical and psychological addiction. Nicotine is the main chemical in tobacco that is addictive. Nicotine can cause a rush of adrenaline when absorbed into the body. Dopamine – the brain’s “happy chemical” – can also be released when smoking tobacco.
- When you stop using tobacco your body starts recovering straight away.
- Smoking costs a lot of money and when you quit you can save that money.

Discussion:
How you ever helped someone who wanted to quit smoking? What worked/what didn’t?
Facilitator notes:

- The NSW Quitline is a confidential phone information and advice service. Phone 137848 (13QUIT) or go to icanquit.com.au.
- You can ask to talk to a Quitline advisor in Arabic, Chinese (Cantonese and Mandarin) and Vietnamese. For all other languages, Quitline can arrange a telephone interpreter service.
- Your doctor can help you manage cravings with Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) and some prescription medications. Using these medications with multi-session behavioural intervention, such as that provided by Quitline, is the most effective way to quit smoking.
- From October 2021 authorised general practitioners can prescribe e-cigarettes for smoking cessation.
Alcohol

Avoid alcohol
Drinking alcohol can cause cancer. The less alcohol you drink, the better it is for you.

Examples of standard drinks:

Facilitator notes:

• Alcohol is linked to eight different types of cancer: mouth; upper throat; larynx; oesophagus, female breast; liver; stomach; and bowel.
• Alcohol is a group 1 carcinogen, which means there is convincing evidence that alcohol causes cancer in humans.
• Even small amounts of alcohol increase your cancer risk. So there is no level of alcohol consumption that is entirely safe.
• More than 3,200 cancer cases each year in Australia could be prevented if people limited their alcohol consumption.
• The Australia Alcohol Guidelines for adults will reduce the short and long-term harm from alcohol if followed. The Guidelines recommend no more than 10 standard drinks over a week, and no more than four standard drinks on any day. Anyone under 18 years should not drink at all. Women who are pregnant, planning a pregnancy or breastfeeding should not drink at all.
• One standard drink is 10 grams of pure alcohol. Find out more about standard drinks at drinksmeter.com. Often a serving of alcohol in a pub or club is larger than a standard drink.

Discussion:

• Is drinking alcohol part of celebrations in your community?
• What are ways of having social fun without alcohol?
Facilitator notes:

- Alcohol can be hard to give up, but any reduction – no matter how small or large – can reduce your risk of cancer. Get more practical tips to start cutting down and taking steps towards a healthier future at cancer.nsw.gov.au/drink-less-alcohol.
- Other benefits from not drinking alcohol include better sleep, increased energy and a balanced mood.
- Popular non-alcoholic drinks include:
  - soda water with lemon or lime
  - kombucha
  - mocktails instead of cocktails
  - half juice, half tap or soda water.
Protect your skin

Facilitator notes:
- UV radiation levels are high in NSW most of the time (UV index 3 and above) so skin needs to be protected from the sun all year.
- When the weather is cool UV radiation levels can still be high. UV radiation can move through clouds and cause damage to skin. Check UV radiation levels each day at the Bureau of Meteorology http://www.bom.gov.au/uv/ or on weather apps.
- Children’s skin is particularly vulnerable to burning and skin damage can result in skin cancer later in life.
- If you stay home but spend time outdoors, for example in your garden or on a balcony, you still need to protect your skin.

Discussion:
What are the differences for children growing up in Australia compared to the northern hemisphere?
Facilitator notes:

- You can prevent nearly all types of skin cancer by protecting your skin from UV radiation.
- Some people worry that they will not get enough vitamin D if they protect their skin. Your doctor can help you work out how much sun exposure you need. For example, it has been estimated that in summer people with brown, dark brown or black skin need under an hour sun exposure on exposed arms or equivalent each day to gain sufficient Vitamin D.
- If you wear clothes that cover your entire body every day, you may not get enough sun exposure and should talk to your doctor about your vitamin D levels. Supplements can be provided by your doctor if you are lacking in vitamin D.
- Find more information at cancer.nsw.gov.au/protect-your-skin.
Take part in cancer screening

Facilitator notes:
- Regular screening, or health checks, are an important part of looking after your health. In Australia there are three national screening programs.
- Cancer screening involves simple tests that look for early signs of cancer, or the conditions that cause cancer, before you can see or feel any changes to your body.
- When you find cancer early, it is easier to treat successfully.
Facilitator notes:

- BreastScreen NSW recommends women aged 50–74 have a free breast screen every two years. You don’t need a doctor’s referral. Find out more at breastscreen.nsw.gov.au. Book online (in English) or call 13 20 50 to make an appointment. You can use the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) to help make an appointment.

- A cervical screening test prevents cervical cancer by detecting the human papillomavirus (HPV). HPV is the cause of almost all cervical cancers. The cervix surrounds the opening to the uterus or womb at the top of the vagina. The test is free for most people, but sometimes there is a small fee, so check with your GP or clinic to see if there is a cost. Find out more at cancer.nsw.gov.au/cervical-screening.

- Bowel cancer screening can detect cancers at an earlier stage, when treatment can be more successful. Eligible Australians from 50–74 years of age are sent a free, simple test every two years that is done at home. Find out more at cancer.nsw.gov.au/dothetest.

- Check with the group if they would like to have a breast, bowel or cervical screening information session. Flipcharts are available for each in multiple community languages.
Facilitator notes:

• You can ask your doctor about these programs.
• It is important for everyone to take part in the right screening programs for you.
Discussion:
What do you think is the most important thing to tell your family about this workshop?
What will you do differently now?

Facilitator notes:
- Please complete the evaluation form so we can improve.
- There has been a lot of information we have covered. You can find the information and more support at the Cancer Institute NSW website, [www.cancer.nsw.gov.au/reduce-your-cancer-risk](http://www.cancer.nsw.gov.au/reduce-your-cancer-risk)
- Check with the group if they would like to ask you anything after the session.
- Have information ready to help people find more information about:
  - local walking groups
  - Get Healthy coaching service
  - your local community health centre.
Further information

Frequently asked questions (FAQs)

Here are some possible questions and comments with some answers to help workshop facilitators.

General questions about cancer

I get told everything causes cancer why should I believe this? / What causes cancer?

We know there are lots of health messages to keep track of, but as the cancer control agency for NSW we only share health messages based on evidence. Smoking, alcohol, what you eat, exposure to UV radiation from the sun and being physically inactive can cause cancer.

There are a number of chemical, physical and biological agents that cause cell changes that lead to cancer. These are called carcinogens. Physical carcinogens include ultraviolet and ionising radiation. Chemical carcinogens include asbestos, components of tobacco smoke, aflatoxin (a contaminant found in food) and arsenic (found in water). Biological carcinogens include certain viruses, bacteria or parasites.

Research has shown that psychological and social factors might be associated with cancer incidence and progression, however further research is needed. Some of the factors that have been identified are: chronic stress; the impact of negative life events such as marital disruption, bereavement, severe trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder; depression; chronic sleep disruption; social isolation and the burden of lower socio-economic status (e.g. education level, income and type of work).

Some cancers can develop without any preventable cause. There are links to further information about the science behind this at the end of the guide.

How much does family history of cancer contribute to having cancer in the future?

It is not unusual for more than one family member to develop cancer. This may be a random coincidence may be due to inherited genetic issues, or may be because of lifestyle or environmental factors. Increasing healthy living behaviours can help prevent cancer.

Inherited genetic issues can be a factor in a range of cancer types. There are tests that can look for gene markers that are known to cause cancer. Talk to your GP for more information.

Does stress cause cancer?

Stress can be long or short term and can have both a negative and positive impact on your everyday life. Positive stress can be motivating, for example related to getting ready for a holiday or a job promotion. Negative stress, or distress, can make it harder for some people to give up smoking or find time for exercise for example. When stress doesn’t go away and becomes chronic, it can trigger disease including cancer.

Chronic stress, anxiety and fear increases cortisol which is a hormone that suppresses the immune system and increases inflammation which, in turn, leads to increased risk of cancer.
Chronic fear and anxiety increase the hormone adrenaline which decreases the blood flow to the brain. Over time this leads to hypoxia (lack of oxygen). In cancer patients, stress, fear, anxiety, and depression can worsen the disease. Depression alone has not been linked as a factor in causing any type of cancer.

**Is cancer infectious?**

Some viruses, bacteria and parasites can potentially cause cancer. Infection with certain types of human papillomavirus (HPV) increases the risk of cervical cancer. Chronic hepatitis B or C infection increases the risk of liver cancer. Some viruses, bacteria and parasites can also cause chronic inflammation which may lead to cancer.

**Are you telling me not to do any of the things I enjoy (drinking alcohol, smoking, eating processed meat)?**

It is not certain that people who do these things will definitely get cancer, but it does increase their risk. We hope the facts in this workshop help you make informed choices to help you stay well. Find out more information at the Cancer Institute NSW website.

**Cancer is a death sentence isn’t it?**

Cancer is a serious disease. However cancer can be treated effectively, especially when found early, and treatments are improving.

If you are eligible, participating in screening programs can help detect cancer early, before it causes symptoms – this can save lives.

**Tobacco**

**I have smoked all my life, is it too late to quit?**

It is never too late to quit smoking. Your health and the people around you will benefit from you quitting.

**Is it true that smoking causes cancers other than lung cancer?**

Yes. Smoking increases the risk of lung, mouth, throat, nose, sinus, oesophagus, bladder, kidney, ureter, pancreas, stomach, liver, cervix, ovary, and bowel cancers as well as leukaemia (cancer in the blood).

**What about waterpipe or shisha?**

There’s a misconception that waterpipe is not as bad for you as cigarettes, because the tobacco is flavoured and passes through water first. But the carcinogens and nicotine are still there. The tobacco in waterpipe is exposed to high heat from burning charcoal, and the smoke contains high levels of toxic compounds. The amount of smoke inhaled during a typical waterpipe session is about 90,000 millilitres (ml), compared with 500–600 ml inhaled when smoking a cigarette. There is no safe level of smoking. Herbal and non tobacco shisha also cause harm to health.

**Healthy eating**

**Is healthy eating for cancer prevention the same as the healthy eating guidelines?**
Cancer prevention healthy eating information provided in this flipchart and at the Cancer Institute NSW healthy eating pages focuses specifically on foods that have been shown to increase or decrease cancer risk. This information sits alongside the Australian Guide to Healthy Eating which provide up-to-date advice about healthy eating more generally for health and wellbeing across age groups – see eatforhealth.gov.au/guidelines. You can also find out how much to eat, or portion size, here https://www.eatforhealth.gov.au/food-essentials/how-much-do-we-need-each-day/recommended-number-serves-adults

How do I find out how much fat and sugar is in processed food?

Looking at the label is the best way to find out how much saturated fat and sugars are in processed or pre-prepared food.

What is in the processed and red meat that causes cancer?

Cooking meat over direct flame causes fat to drop on the fire. The flames that result can form a type of hydrocarbon on the food that has been linked to cancer. Also when a chemical in red and processed meat called haem is broken down in the gut, N-nitroso compounds are formed which damage cells that line the bowel. This can lead to bowel cancer.

How much sugar is OK?

When it comes to preventing cancer and maintain your health, we recommend avoiding the consumption of sugary drinks altogether and limit sweetened foods.

Does too much salt cause cancer?

Diets high in foods preserved by salting, such as salted fish or pickled vegetables, have been linked to an increased risk of stomach and nasopharyngeal cancer. Too much salt can also cause other health problems, like high blood pressure, heart disease and stroke.

You need some salt (sodium) in your diet as it helps regulate fluid levels. Although adults should eat no more than one teaspoon (6g or 2300mg) of salt a day including that contained in processed food.

Even if you do not add salt to your food, you may not be aware of just how much salt you are consuming from packaged and take-away foods such as pizza, pies, sauces, condiments, seasonings, dressings, soups, margarines, bread and breakfast cereals. It is important you
check labels and choose products without added salt or with low sodium (how salt can be described on food labels).

**Where can I find out more information about healthy foods and how to cook them?**

You can find out more information about healthy foods for cancer prevention at the Cancer Institute NSW’s healthy eating pages. More information about how to cook foods that are less familiar to you can be found at www.eatforhealth.gov.au/eating-well/healthy-recipes.

**Being active**

**Can you prevent cancer coming back with diet or exercise?**

Healthy eating can reduce the risk of cancer returning. It is not yet clear whether being a vegetarian reduces the risk of cancer, more research is needed. All eligible people should participate in cancer screening regardless of diet.

Physical activity supervised by a health professional has been shown to improve cancer treatment outcomes.

**I get embarrassed when I exercise in public. What can I do?**

It can be very helpful to exercise with friends. Set up a walking group. Ask your Council which public parks have an outdoor gym and meet your friends there or take your family.

**What if you exercise a lot but still spend most of your day sitting?**

There is a difference between being physically inactive and sedentary behaviour. Sitting for long periods at work or lying on the couch at home are examples of being sedentary. A person can exercise a lot and also spend too long sitting each day. Get up and move around throughout the day as often as possible to break up long periods of sitting.

**How much water should I drink?**

The amount you drink should vary depending on range of factors including the climate you live in, the amount of physical activity you do. Drink more when you exercise more, especially if you are sweating. For women about 8-9 cups a day and 10 cups a day for men is good. Ideally water makes up most of this amount but other hot and cold drinks can be counted in this total.

**Alcohol**

**Why are you trying to stop me drinking alcohol?**

Alcohol has been recognised as a carcinogen (a substance that causes cancer) for a long time. We want people to be aware of the risk so they can make informed choices. Drinking alcohol doesn’t mean you will get cancer but it does increase risk.

**How much of each type of alcohol is a standard drink?**

A standard drink is the measure of alcohol used to work out safe drinking levels. Each bottle or can of alcohol should say how many standard drinks are contained within. You can find pictures of types of different types of alcohol in this Standard Drinks Guide https://yourroom.health.nsw.gov.au/resources/publications/Pages/standard-drinks-guide.aspx.
Finding correct information

How do I know what you are telling me is true?

It is important to check each source of health information you find. This information is prepared by the Cancer Institute NSW which is part of the NSW Government. All the information comes from official Cancer data and statistics site, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), peer reviewed journals and reputable websites.

Activities

Have activities ready for when the group takes a break or for after the information session. You can promote this at the same time as your workshop.

Shorter activities: (Only do one at a time.)

- Turn to the person next to you and ask them one of these questions:
  - What is your favourite healthy food?
  - Did you like to play sport as a child? Or now?
  - Do you cook? What is the dish you are best known for?
  - Do you have children in your life that you look after? What sort of active games do they like?
- Walk around the block. Prepare a list of 5-10 buildings and signs for people to look out for as they walk. You can also do this activity in a shopping mall if the weather is too hot or rainy.
- Ask the group to pick a regular meal that they like to cook and change one ingredient to make it healthier. Suggestions could include: use more vegetables; use low fat yoghurt or cheese; use less oil; bake rather than fry; try brown rice instead of white.

Longer activities: (Only choose one longer activity - if you have time.)

Arrange to meet at a local park with a walking track and/or an outdoor gym. Your local health service or council may be able to meet you to show you how to use the equipment or you can read the signs on the equipment.

Ask at your local community health centre if there is a nutritionist or dietitian who can run a supermarket tour to look at food labels with a dietitian. This is a great way to learn about hidden sugar and fat in processed foods.

Links to information and services:

- Cancer Institute NSW [www.cancer.nsw.gov.au](http://www.cancer.nsw.gov.au) provides information on:
• **Healthy Eating Active Living** is an NSW Government website with healthy eating tips and information on free programs to get you active. It aims to help you live a healthier life through food and exercise see [healthyliving.nsw.gov.au](http://healthyliving.nsw.gov.au).

• **Get Healthy NSW** offers free health coaching over the phone to help you reach your health goals and reduce your alcohol consumption. The website also has great resources.

• **The Australian Dietary Guidelines** tell you what foods to eat and how much. They also tell you what foods to avoid – see [eatforhealth.gov.au/guidelines](http://eatforhealth.gov.au/guidelines)


• **This lunchbox tool** ([healthylunchbox.com.au](http://healthylunchbox.com.au)) by the Cancer Council helps you learn how to pack a healthy lunch for children and adults.


• **Your Room** provides facts about alcohol and where to get support.

• **The Australian Physical activity and sedentary behaviour guidelines** explain how much exercise you need at every life stage. They have tips on getting started, and lots of practical ideas for sitting less and moving more.

• **Shisha No Thanks project** raises awareness of the harms of waterpipe smoking – see [shishanothanks.org.au](http://shishanothanks.org.au).
• World Cancer Research Fund Continuous Update Project provides a summary of the evidence related to risk factors for cancer for example diet and cancer – see wcrf.org/dietandcancer.

• Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) provides up to date information about the burden of diseases including cancer in Australia.

• Bilingual community education on a range of topics is available from South Western Sydney, Western Sydney and Sydney LHDs. Healthy lifestyles further training has been developed by Western Sydney LHD and is available in Western Sydney and South Western Sydney LHDs. Contact the LHD multicultural health services for more information.

Evaluation form

This evaluation form is for the facilitator to complete with the group. Facilitators can verbally ask the following questions to the group and take some notes below. There is an evaluation form for each participant to complete which provides better quality evaluation. This form is required for sessions funded by the Institute and is available from CINSW-Prevention@health.nsw.gov.au.

**Evaluation Form:**

| Staying well and preventing cancer information session | Date: / / |

Thank you for holding a Healthy Living information session. Please let us know if the information session has been useful for your participants by photocopying this Evaluation Form and recording their feedback in response to the questions below. Please send any completed Evaluation Forms or other feedback to the Cancer Institute NSW at CINSW-prevention@health.nsw.gov.au.

Venue: _____________________________________

Language: _________________________________________________________________

Type of participants: Community members or health workers

Number of Participants: __________________

**Question 1:** What is one important thing you have learnt about cancer prevention today? One important thing I have learnt: (Please continue on back of page if you need more space to record each answer.)

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**Question 2:** What is one new thing you would do as a result of participating in the session?

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