

What is a Cancer Screening Test?

Cancer screening is a test that helps find early signs of cancer, before any symptoms start. The test checks for changes in your body that might mean that cancer is present.

Early cancer can be cured. Diagnosing cancer early makes it easier to treat and gives you a better chance of having a good recovery than if cancer is diagnosed at a later stage. If a screening test is positive (finds something unusual), you will need further tests to see if it is cancer or not.

What does it test for?

The Australian Government offers three national cancer screening programs to help find early signs of:

- Bowel cancer
- Breast cancer
- Cervical (neck of womb) cancer

Many other cancers do not have a screening test. It is important to know what is normal for your body and if you notice any changes or have any worries, speak to your doctor.

Who is it for?

Every adult in Australia of an eligible age is encouraged to participate in cancer screening. Participation in cancer screening is voluntary.

Cancer screening is for healthy people. A cancer screening test is for people who do not have any symptoms. If you have any symptoms you believe might be a sign of cancer, see your doctor.

The cost is free or reduced if you have a Medicare card or other health insurance.

If you are trans or gender diverse, speak with your doctor about your individual screening needs.

Cancer screening saves lives.

For more information

Cancer (General Information)

<https://www.health.gov.au/topics/cancer>

Bowel Cancer

National Bowel Screening Program

bowelscreening.org.au

Phone 1800 627 701

Breast Cancer

BreastScreen Australia Program

www.health.gov.au/BSA

Phone 13 20 50

Cervical Cancer

National Cervical Screening Program

www.health.gov.au/NCSP

Phone 1800 627 701

About the Social Policy Group

SPG is a national, non-government, not-for-profit body with specialist expertise in social policy and program design with a particular focus on supporting culturally and linguistically diverse populations. This resource has been developed with funding from the Department of Health and Aged Care to help multicultural communities reduce their cancer risk and experience the best cancer outcomes.

Cancer Screening

Information on the early detection of cancer

ENGLISH



v 1.3 - 14 Nov 2024

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Bowel Cancer Screening

Bowel cancer, also known as colorectal cancer, is the fourth most common cancer in Australia.

What is a Bowel Cancer Screening Test?

A Bowel Cancer Screening Test uses a simple test that you can do in your own home. It checks for small amounts of blood in your stool (poo), which can be an early sign of bowel cancer. If bowel cancer is found early, treatment works better.

Recommendation:

- All people aged 50–74 should do a free bowel cancer screening kit every two years.
- People aged 45–49 can do a free screening if they request.

If you have symptoms, like unusual bleeding, or a family history of bowel cancer, no matter your age, speak to your doctor.

For more information, visit bowelscreening.org.au

How do I book a test?

The National Bowel Cancer Screening Program sends free Bowel Screening kits by mail to eligible Medicare card holders. You then complete the test at home and return the kit by mail.

If you have a Medicare card and have not been sent a screening kit, you can ask for a screening kit via the website www.ncsr.gov.au/information-for-participants/request-a-free-bowel-test-kit.html or **phone 1800 627 701**

If you do not have a Medicare card, speak to your doctor about having a screening for bowel cancer.

Breast Cancer Screening

Breast cancer is the most common cancer in Australian women. It is more common in older women, with more than 75% of cases in women over 50.

What is a mammogram?

A mammogram is an x-ray that looks for changes in the breast tissue. It can find small changes that you cannot feel. It is the best way to detect breast cancer early. The x-ray used is a very safe test.

Recommendation:

- All women aged 50–74 should have a free screening mammogram every two years
- Women aged 40–49 and those over 75 can also have free screening if they request.
- Be 'breast aware' by regularly checking the look and feel of your breasts.

If you notice any unusual breast changes, like a lump or nipple discharge, at any age, speak to your doctor.

For more information, visit www.health.gov.au/BSA

How do I book a mammogram?

A Breast Screening mammogram is free through your local state BreastScreen service.

If you have a Medicare card, you can book by contacting your state BreastScreen service via the website www.health.gov.au/our-work/breastscreen-australia-program/having-a-breast-screen/book-your-free-breastscreen-mammogram-appointment or **phone 13 20 50**

If you do not have a Medicare card, speak to your doctor about having a screening for breast cancer.

Cervical Screening

Cervical cancer is one of the easiest cancers to prevent because screening can find abnormal cells before they turn into cancer.

What is a Cervical Screening Test?

A Cervical Screening Test is a simple test to check the health of the cervix (neck of the womb). It can detect Human Papillomavirus (HPV), a virus that can cause changes to cervix cells which can lead to cancer. Early cervix changes can be treated to stop cancer from developing. HPV vaccination as a teenager or young adult helps prevent cervical cancer.

Recommendation:

- All women with a cervix aged 25–74 should have a cervical screening test every five years.

If you have any symptoms, like unusual bleeding or pain, at any age, speak to your doctor

For more information, visit www.health.gov.au/NCSP

How do I book a test?

All Cervical Screening Tests are arranged through a healthcare provider. You can book a test at most doctors' clinics, Community Health Centres, Women's Health Centres, Multicultural Health Services or at Aboriginal Health Services.

In some cases, your healthcare provider may be able to support you to do the self-collected test. Many women find this choice more acceptable and comfortable, but it is not suitable for everyone. Speak to your healthcare provider to find out more about this option.

The screening recommendation is the same for people with a Medicare card and those without.