You can lower your risk of cancer by enjoying a healthy diet, being physically active every day and maintaining a healthy body weight. Studies show being overweight, physically inactive and not eating well cause nearly one third of all cancers.

Being overweight or obese also increases your risk of type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure, gall bladder disease, gout, impaired fertility, lower back pain, osteoarthritis and many other conditions.

Am I overweight or obese?

Use both the Body Mass Index (BMI) and waist circumference to check body fatness.

Body mass index (BMI)

BMI is a measure of your body weight in relation to your height. To work out your BMI, you need to know your weight (in kilograms) and your height (in metres).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Healthiest Weight</th>
<th>Overweight</th>
<th>Obese - BMI 30-35</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Healthy Weight BMI 18.5-25</td>
<td>Increased risk of health problems</td>
<td>High risk of health problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overweight BMI 25-30</td>
<td>High risk of health problems</td>
<td>Very High risk of health problems</td>
</tr>
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<td>Obese - BMI 30-35</td>
<td>Very High risk of health problems</td>
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Example

Steve weighs 82kg and is 1.74 metres tall. To calculate his BMI: 82 ÷ (1.74 x 1.74) = 27kg / m² Steve’s BMI is 27 and is in the overweight range. Ideally your BMI should be between 18.5 and 25, in the healthy weight range. However, the specific cut-off measurements of BMI may not be suitable for all ethnic groups, who may have equivalent levels of risk at a lower BMI or higher BMI.

Waist circumference

For some diseases including post-menopausal breast cancer, fat carried around the abdomen and waist is a greater risk than fat carried on the hips and thighs for type.

Take your waist circumference measurement at the narrowest point between the lower rib and the top of the hips (the iliac crest) at the end of a normal breath.

Men should aim for a waist circumference below 94cm. Women should aim for a waist circumference below 80cm.

What should I do?

If you are overweight or obese it may be because you are eating more than you need for your level of activity. To maintain a healthy weight, enjoy regular physical activity and eat according to your needs. Make your diet mostly fruit, vegetables, cereals and other low fat foods.

Losing weight to reach a healthy weight for your height isn’t easy, however any weight loss will be beneficial. Popular weight loss diets generally don’t work in the long-term. It is better to make small changes to your diet and physical activity habits that you can maintain for a lifetime.

Plan to:

- make it a priority not to gain more weight
- reduce your weight by 5 to 10 per cent if you are overweight or obese. Aim to lose 1 to 4kg per month
- cut back on foods and drinks high in fats and sugars – snack on veggies and fruit
- avoid fried foods
- increase your physical activity.

Remember, if you have any concerns or questions, please contact your doctor.

Where can I get reliable information?

Cancer Council 13 11 20

Information and support for you and your family for the cost of a local call anywhere in Australia.

Cancer Council Australia website

www.cancer.org.au