

# Driving and your health - Think about it!



## Tool Box Talk No.10 Facilitator's Notes Cancer Prevention

### A. OVERVIEW

This briefing covers important information about cancer and cancer prevention including:

- how cancer affects driving; and
- how cancer can be prevented and managed.

### B. DURATION

10 - 20 minutes

### C. KEY MESSAGES

1. 1 in 3 Australians will develop cancer during their lifetime.
2. Many cancers are related to lifestyle factors. You can reduce your risk by:
  - stopping smoking;
  - making healthy food choices;
  - watching your weight;
  - being active every day; and
  - moderating your alcohol intake.
3. Most cancers can be treated more successfully if detected early - know the warning signs and see your doctor about routine tests for early detection.
4. For more information or assistance, talk to your doctor or contact the Cancer Council in your State or Territory.



### D. HANDOUTS AND RESOURCES

- FACT SHEET – *The Big 'C' - Cancer Prevention*.
- Power Point presentation.
- Other resources – brochures and posters may be resourced through the health organisations listed on the NTC website (Useful Contacts section).





## 1. The Big “C”

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Cancer takes many forms but generally involves uncontrolled cell growth - the cancer cells invade healthy tissues so that those tissues are unable to do their job properly. If left untreated, cancer cells can spread from where they first started to other parts of the body.

1 in 3 Australians will develop cancer during their lifetime. The majority of cancers affect people in their 50s and onwards.

Improved treatments and methods of early detection mean that many people overcome cancer. The most common forms of cancer are skin cancer, bowel cancer, breast cancer and prostate cancer.

## 2. How does cancer affect driving?

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The effect of cancer on driving depends on the type of cancer. Cancer treatment may affect your ability to drive because of the side effects such as fatigue, nausea and inability to concentrate for long periods of time. Speak to your doctor who will be able to assess your ability to drive. It may be that you can come to some agreement with your employer to reduce your hours, duties or workload.

You can still hold a commercial drivers licence if your doctor and/or specialist says that you are likely to remain stable and have normal physical and mental abilities.

## 3. What can you do to prevent cancer?

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Many cancers are lifestyle-related so there's a lot you can do to reduce your risk

- ☐ **Avoid smoking.** This is important as smoking is linked to about 30% of cancer cases. If you currently smoke, try and quit. If you need help, contact the QUIT line on 131 848.
- ☐ **Make healthy food choices** (see Tool Box Talk 6). Eating more fruit and vegetables and less processed and fatty meats (e.g. sausages) will significantly reduce your chances of developing cancer.
- ☐ **Be active every day** (see Tool Box Talk 7). Getting some regular moderate exercise and maintaining a healthy body weight will also reduce your risk.
- ☐ **Protect yourself from the sun's damaging rays.** Wear a long-sleeved, close-weave shirt and a broad-brimmed hat when exposed to the sun, and apply sunscreen regularly – keep sunscreen in your glove box.
- ☐ **Moderate your alcohol intake.** Aim for 2 standard glasses or less per day with 2 alcohol free days per week. Alcohol is an important risk factor for cancers of the digestive tract, liver and breast.

Making these changes to your lifestyle will not only reduce your cancer risk but will also help protect you from heart diseases, diabetes and other lifestyle-related disease.

## 4. Common cancers - what do you need to know?

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### Skin Cancer

Australia is the skin cancer capital of the world with 1 out of 2 of us likely to suffer from skin cancer at some time in our lives.

The good news is that you can do a lot to avoid sun damage and skin cancer:

- **Wear a long-sleeved, close-weave shirt and a broad-brimmed hat**

Physically protecting yourself from the sun is the best option.



- **Apply sunscreen regularly**

Keep a bottle of sunscreen in your glove box so you can re-apply during your breaks. To be effective sunscreen needs to be applied every 2-4 hours. Always use a broad-spectrum 30+ sunscreen.

- **Wear sunglasses**

The sun's rays damage your eyes as well as your skin, causing cataracts and other eye problems. Wear sunglasses while driving and during your breaks to protect your eyes and reduce the sun glare. Check the label for "100% UV protection" and choose a "wrap-around" style

- **Look out for changes in your skin**, particularly as you get older and particularly in areas that have been exposed to the sun, such as your back, shoulders, face, neck, hands and forearms (drivers arm!). It's also a good idea to ask your doctor to examine your skin on a regular basis. In particular you'll need **to be on the look out** for:
  - a sore, ulcer, or red scaly patch on the skin, or white patch on the lips, that doesn't heal;
  - an unusual freckle or mole that seems to grow quickly, changes shape or colour, is new, or bleeds or repeatedly itches.

**Skin cancer may be successfully treated if detected early. This means keeping an eye on yourself, your mates and your family.**

## Lung Cancer

- Smoking contributes to almost 1/3 of **all** cancers. In addition to lung cancer, smokers are at a greater risk of developing bladder, cervical, oesophageal, mouth, laryngeal, kidney and stomach cancers, as well as leukaemia.
- Lung cancer is difficult to treat and is the most common cause of death from cancer in Australia. Up to 9 out of 10 lung cancers are caused by smoking.
- **Symptoms of lung cancer include** a persistent cough, breathlessness, pains in the chest, and recurring pneumonia and bronchitis. If you have any of these symptoms, be sure to make an appointment with your doctor. Remember, early detection saves lives.

## Prostate Cancer

- Prostate cancer is the second most common cancer diagnosed (after skin cancer). It affects 1 in 11 Australian men.
- The causes of prostate cancer are unknown. However the chance of developing prostate cancer increases: 1) as you get older - nearly two thirds of all new prostate cancers are found in men over the age of 65; 2) if your father or brother has had prostate cancer.
- If you have a family history of prostate cancer or you are concerned about prostate cancer see your doctor.

## Breast Cancer - Ask your Mrs

After skin cancer, breast cancer is the most common cancer in women, affecting at least 1 in 11 Australian women.

Women should:

- Be aware of the normal look and feel of their breasts.
- See a doctor immediately if they recognise new or unusual breast changes.
- If aged between 50-69, have a mammogram every two years through BreastScreen Australia.

## **Bowel Cancer - Don't sit on it**



- Bowel cancer is one of the most treatable cancers, and with early diagnosis can very often be cured. 1 in 21 Australians can expect to develop bowel cancer.
- You are at **particular risk** if:
  - you are older - as with most cancers, the older you are, the greater your risk of getting bowel cancer;
  - a member of your family has had bowel cancer; and
  - you have an existing bowel condition such as polyps or ulcerative colitis.
- **Early detection** is important, so see your doctor if you are concerned by symptoms such as:
  - blood in your bowel motions;
  - persistent changes in bowel habits such as diarrhoea, constipation or pain;
  - anaemia (low red blood cell count);
  - loss of weight; or
  - general ill health.

\* Your doctor may recommend regular screening tests if you're over 50, especially if you have a close relative with the disease. These tests are simple and painless.

## **5. Early detection could save you a lot of trouble!**

Early detection of cancer is important as most cancers can be treated more successfully if diagnosed in the early stages. This doesn't mean panicking at the slightest lump or bump – it means:

- Being aware of your body and what to look for and speaking to your doctor if you have any concerns;
- Taking advantage of the routine medical tests to detect cancer at any early stage, e.g. skin cancer screening, bowel cancer screening and mammogram (breast x-ray) etc; and
- Being aware of circumstances such as your family history which may increase your risk.

## **6. For more information**

Contact:

- Your local doctor.
- The Cancer Helpline: 13 11 20 [www.cancer.org.au](http://www.cancer.org.au).
- QUIT Helpline: 13 18 48 [www.quit.org.au](http://www.quit.org.au).

**For more information see [www.ntc.gov.au](http://www.ntc.gov.au)**

**Looking after your health is like looking after your vehicle - regular care and maintenance pays off in the long run**

The Driving and Your Health Campaign is supported by:

