



## **NATIONAL PHYSICAL ACTIVITY GUIDELINES**

### **PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AS PART OF A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE**

Being physically active is an important part of a healthy lifestyle. It is also important to stay healthy and live longer by eating a variety of nutritious foods, drinking alcohol only at low levels and being smoke free.

People who have healthy lifestyles are at lower risk of health problems such as coronary heart disease, stroke, colorectal cancer, diabetes, osteoarthritis and osteoporosis.

The table below shows how unhealthy lifestyles involving physical inactivity, a poor diet, high levels of alcohol drinking and smoking are linked to many health problems. Making changes to any of these lifestyle factors can help prevent several diseases and conditions.

**Links between unhealthy lifestyle choices and various diseases and conditions**

|                        | <b>Poor diet</b> | <b>Physical inactivity</b> | <b>Tobacco use</b> | <b>Alcohol misuse</b> |
|------------------------|------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Coronary heart disease | ✓                | ✓                          | ✓                  | ✓                     |
| Stroke                 | ✓                | ✓                          | ✓                  | ✓                     |
| Lung cancer            |                  |                            | ✓                  |                       |
| Colorectal cancer      | ✓                | ✓                          |                    |                       |
| Diabetes               | ✓                | ✓                          |                    |                       |
| Osteoarthritis         |                  | ✓                          |                    |                       |
| Osteoporosis           | ✓                | ✓                          | ✓                  | ✓                     |

#### **Healthy eating**

Good food and plenty of activity is essential for good health. Healthy eating helps prevent many health conditions, gives you vitality and energy to get through a busy day, helps boost your immune system, builds strong bones and improves sports performance. And of course, good food is also one of life's pleasures!

Healthy eating is about enjoying a wide variety of nutritious foods. This means eating enough foods from each of the five food groups every day, as well as choosing different foods from within each group from day to day, week to week and at different times of the year.

Try to eat lots of fruit, vegetables, wholegrain breads and cereals; moderate amounts of low fat dairy food and lean meats; and small amounts of foods high in fat, sugar and salt. Drinking plenty of water each day is also essential.

Two readily available and free guides to food, nutrition and health are the *National Health and Medical Research Council Dietary Guidelines for Australians* and *The Australian Guide to Healthy Eating*. Contact 1 800 020 103 or visit <http://www.health.gov.au/publicat/publicat/phys.htm> for more information.

#### **Low-risk drinking of alcohol**

Alcohol is widely used and enjoyed by Australians and can form part of an enjoyable and healthy lifestyle. In fact, low-risk levels of alcohol drinking can provide some health benefits for middle-aged and older people. However drinking in excess of low-risk drinking levels can have harmful effects on people's health.

Alcohol has a range of short-term effects including effects on the brain. It can cause stress, sleep and loss of sexual function; diseases of the gut, pancreas, heart and circulation and cause risky behaviour, injury and death. Over time, high levels of alcohol drinking increases the risk of developing cancer, cirrhosis of the liver, cognitive problems, dementia and alcohol dependence.

Guidelines for low-risk levels of drinking are:

##### **For men:**

- No more than 4 standard drinks a day *on average*;
- And no more than 6 standard drinks on *any one day*.

##### **For women:**

- No more than 2 standard drinks a day *on average*;
- And no more than 4 standard drinks on *any one day*.
- Everyone should have 1 or 2 alcohol-free days a week.



Drinking alcohol before exercise can reduce performance by affecting coordination and causing dehydration. Alcohol consumption after exercise can lead to poor recovery and slow repair of injuries, as it can lead to dehydration and increased swelling and bleeding of injuries.

For more information about the Australian Alcohol Guidelines and alcohol and your health, visit [www.alcoholguidelines.gov.au](http://www.alcoholguidelines.gov.au).

### ***Smoking***

Every year, about 19,000 Australians die from diseases caused by smoking. One in two lifetime smokers will die from their habit.

Every cigarette is doing you damage. Cigarettes are full of poisons – tobacco smoke contains over 4000 chemicals. As well as tar and nicotine, there is also the gas carbon monoxide (found in car exhaust fumes), ammonia (found in floor cleaner) and arsenic (found in rat poison).

It's not just a possibility – it's a certainty that smoking will damage your health. Smoking causes disease including cancer, emphysema and heart disease. At least 43 of the chemicals in tobacco smoke are known to cause cancer of the lung, throat, mouth, bladder and kidneys.

Smoking affects your fitness level and makes it harder to be physically active. It also reduces the benefits to your body of being active.

Another good reason to give up smoking is that it's expensive. The cost of smoking 25 cigarettes a day can be as much as \$3000 a year.

Advice and assistance to smokers who want to kick the habit is available from the Quitline 13 18 48 and the Quitnow website at [www.quitnow.info.au](http://www.quitnow.info.au)

*For more information about Physical Activity and Health and to obtain a copy of the National Physical Activity Guidelines, please visit the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing's Nutrition and Physical Activity website at: <http://www.health.gov.au/pubhlth/strateg/active/index.htm>*

For more information about Walk to Work Day, please visit the Walk to Work Day website at: [www.walk.com.au](http://www.walk.com.au)

