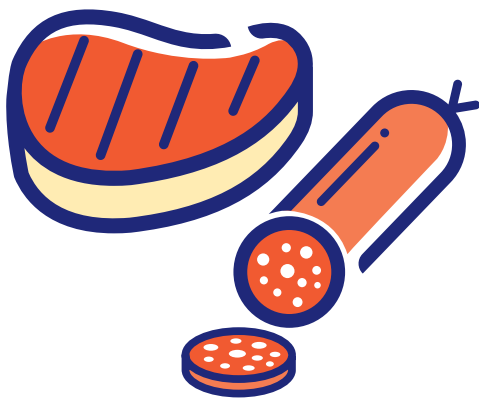


# **Eat less red and processed meat**

**Reduce your cancer risk**



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# Reducing your cancer risk

A healthy lifestyle can prevent one third of cancers. To reduce your risk of cancer, Cancer Council NSW recommends these lifestyle choices:

- **Limit red meat and avoid processed meat**
- Eat at least 5 serves of vegetables and 2 serves of fruit each day
- Eat a variety of wholegrain, wholemeal and high-fibre foods, such as bread, pasta, oats, rice, legumes (beans, peas and lentils) and nuts
- Move more, sit less and be active for at least 30 minutes each day
- Be a healthy body weight
- Avoid high-kilojoule foods and sugary drinks to prevent weight gain
- Choose foods low in salt
- Limit drinking alcohol
- Don't smoke and avoid other people's smoke
- Protect your skin from the sun
- If you can, breastfeed your baby for at least 6 months

## Q: What are red and processed meats?



**Red meat** includes beef, lamb, pork, veal, goat, venison and kangaroo.



**Processed meat** is meat that has been preserved by smoking, curing, salting or by adding the preservatives nitrates and nitrites. This includes ham, bacon, salami, frankfurt, prosciutto and some sausages such as cabanossi and kransky.

## Q: Does eating red and processed meat increase cancer risk?

The World Health Organization classifies processed meat as a Group 1 carcinogen, which means that there's convincing evidence that it causes bowel cancer. Red meat is classified as a Group 2A carcinogen, which means it probably causes bowel cancer. Bowel cancer is one of the most common cancers in Australia.

By reducing your intake of red meat and avoiding processed meat you can reduce your risk of cancer.

About 2600 cases of bowel cancer diagnosed each year in Australian adults can be attributed to eating red and processed meat.

## Q: How does red and processed meat increase cancer risk?

Researchers are still investigating how red and processed meat cause cancer. However, there are several possible reasons:

- Red and processed meat contain haem iron, which makes meat red in colour. When haem is broken down in the gut it forms N-nitroso compounds. These can damage the cells lining the bowel, which can lead to cancer.
- The preservatives nitrates and nitrites used in processed meats are also broken down into N-nitroso compounds.
- Cancer causing chemicals develop when meat is burnt or charred.



## Q: How much red and processed meat should I eat?

You don't need to stop eating red and processed meat, however, it is best to cut down.

Cancer Council NSW and the *Australian Dietary Guidelines* recommend that you eat no more than 700 g raw or 455 g cooked, lean red meat each week and that you eat little, if any, processed meat.

**A serve of red meat is equal to 90–100 g raw or 65 g cooked:**

- ½ cup lean raw mince
- 1 lamb loin chop
- ½ cup diced raw meat

This means, you could have a serve of red meat every day or 2 serves across 3–4 meals a week.

When shopping for red meat, you can use the raw meat guidelines to work out how much to buy. For a family of four buy 400 g of lean meat for one meal.

**Swap a serve of red meat for:**

- 80 g cooked chicken (100 g raw)
- 100 g cooked fish fillet (115 g raw) or 1 small can of fish (95 g)
- 2 large eggs (120 g)
- 150 g (1 cup) cooked or canned legumes, e.g. kidney beans, chickpeas or lentils
- 170 g tofu
- 30 g nuts, seeds, or nut or seed pastes

## Q: Do I need to eat red meat?

Lean red meat can be an important part of a balanced diet. It's a great source of iron, zinc, vitamin B12 and protein. Iron is essential for making haemoglobin, which transports oxygen around the body in the blood. A low iron intake can lead to anaemia, which causes tiredness, breathlessness and poor immune function.

You don't need to stop eating red meat to reduce your cancer risk, however look at ways to include more plant-based foods in your meals.

Instead of red meat include lean chicken (or other poultry), fish, eggs and legumes. The *Australian Dietary Guidelines* recommend you eat about 2 serves of fish (preferably oily) every week. Oily fish includes swordfish, salmon, sardines, gemfish and mackerel.

If you don't eat meat or other animal foods, it is important to ensure you are getting enough protein, vitamin B12, iron, zinc, calcium and omega-3 fatty acids.

In Australia, fresh sausages don't contain nitrates or nitrites, but they are high in saturated fat and salt and are best eaten occasionally.

## HOW TO EAT LESS RED AND PROCESSED MEAT



- **Reduce** your serve of red meat and fill at least half your dinner plate with a variety of different coloured vegetables.
- **Use more** vegetables and legumes in recipes, e.g. add carrot, celery, mushrooms, peas and lentils to bolognese sauce and chickpeas to curries.
- **Eat a meat-free meal** at least once every week. Try a vegetable-based pasta, risotto, frittata, soup or curry.
- **Use fish or chicken** in curries, casseroles, pastas, salads and sandwiches.
- **Replace processed meat** such as ham, bacon, prosciutto or pepperoni with chicken, tinned tuna, mushrooms, eggplant, tomato, capsicum, baked beans or cheese. Add extra flavour with smoked paprika or chilli.
- **Look at the ingredients list** and avoid meat that contains nitrates or nitrites (additives 249, 250, 251 or 252).



## COOKING TIPS



- **Buy lean mince**, lean cuts of meat and avoid marbled meat.
- **Trim visible fat** from meat before cooking.
- **Use lower fat cooking methods** such as steaming, poaching, stir-frying and pan-frying with a small amount of poly- or monounsaturated oil.
- **Marinate meat** to prevent burning, add flavour and to keep meat tender.
- **Try lower temperature cooking methods** such as casseroles, slow roasting or microwaving.

### SEE THE OTHER BROCHURES IN THIS SERIES

- Eat fruit, vegetables, wholegrains and fibre
- Drink less alcohol
- Be physically active
- Be a healthy weight

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