

## Body Awareness

### Signs and symptoms to look for:

- Unexplained weight loss or tiredness
- Difficulty in swallowing
- Increasingly out of breath
- A cough or croaky voice that lasts longer than 3 weeks
- Unexplained persistent pain or ache
- A change in the size, shape or colour of a mole
- Unusual lump or swelling anywhere
- A change to bowel motions that lasts longer than 6 weeks
- Blood in your bowel motions
- Blood in your urine
- Change in urinary habits
- Unusual changes to the breast e.g. a lump, pain/discomfort, dimpling of the skin, veins becoming more visible, changes in size/shape, nipple discharge, inverted nipple, rash

**The symptoms outlined in this leaflet are often caused by something less serious and doesn't usually mean it's cancer. However, finding cancer early makes it more treatable and a trip to your doctor could save your life. If in doubt, get it checked out. If it's not serious, your mind will be put at rest. You certainly won't be wasting anyone's time.**

If you have any concerns about cancer you can talk to one of our specialist nurses on the Cancer Focus NI **FREE** information and support Nurse Line.

**0800 783 3339**

Monday, Wednesday and Friday 9am - 1pm.  
Calls are **free** and **confidential** from a landline.  
[nurseline@cancerfocusni.org](mailto:nurseline@cancerfocusni.org)



Cancer Focus Northern Ireland  
40-44 Eglantine Avenue  
Belfast BT9 6DX

T: 028 9066 3281  
E: [behealthy@cancerfocusni.org](mailto:behealthy@cancerfocusni.org)  
[www.cancerfocusni.org](http://www.cancerfocusni.org)



Charity No: NIC 101307



## Focus on Women's Health



**Every year, approximately 6,500 women are diagnosed with cancer in Northern Ireland. Around 1,600 are the less serious non malignant skin cancers. But remember, almost half of all cancers can be prevented through a healthier lifestyle.**

## **The 3 most common cancers in women:**

### **Breast**

Around 1,450 women are diagnosed each year. It is important that women are breast aware at any age, and if you are aged between 50 and 70, attend screening appointments when invited. If you are over 70, you are still at risk of breast cancer and can book an appointment at your local breast screening unit. If you notice any unusual changes in your breast, please see your GP.

### **Lung**

Approximately 650 women are diagnosed with lung cancer each year. Tobacco is the major cause – linked to an estimated 86% of lung cancers (NI Direct)

### **Bowel**

Approximately 530 women are diagnosed each year. If you are aged between 60 and 74, please use the bowel testing kit when it is sent to your home as part of the bowel screening programme.



## **Some simple tips include:**

### **Healthy Weight**

Keeping to a healthy weight is one of the most important things you can do to lower your risk of cancer.

### **Healthy Diet**

- Eat at least five portions of fruit and vegetables every day – these can be fresh, frozen, canned, cooked or raw
- Eat more fibre – switch to brown bread, wholemeal pasta, brown rice rather than white
- High salt intake is linked to stomach cancer, so aim for under 6g per day
- Eat less red meat (beef, pork, lamb) and avoid processed meats such as sausages, bacon and salami
- Cut back on foods high in fat and sugar

### **Physical Activity**

Exercise helps you maintain a healthy weight. Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity weekly (e.g. walking, gardening, golf) or 75 minutes of vigorous physical activity weekly (e.g. sport, running, circuits). For cancer prevention, the more physical activity you do the better. But any amount is better than none at all.

### **Care in the Sun**

Even in Northern Ireland you can get skin cancer from the sun, especially if you play sports or work outside. Follow this simple advice:

- Wear a T-shirt and hat
- Stay in the shade from 11am–3pm
- Use SPF15+ sunscreen and UVA 4 or 5 star
- Keep an eye on moles. If you notice any change in colour, shape or size, tell your doctor
- Avoid sun beds

For help and advice visit  
**[www.careinthesun.org](http://www.careinthesun.org)**

### **Alcohol**

If you drink alcohol of any type, limit your intake. Not drinking alcohol is better for cancer prevention. Drinking alcohol can increase the risk of at least seven types of cancer, including those of the mouth, gullet, throat, liver, bowel and breast.

### **Smoking**

The best thing you can do for your health is stop smoking. Top tips for stopping:

- Get free professional stop smoking support
- Pick a quit date and stick to it
- Use stop smoking aids e.g. gum, patches, tablets
- Make a list of all the reasons why you want / need to stop smoking
- Avoid second hand smoke

For stop smoking help go to  
**[www.stopsmokingni.info](http://www.stopsmokingni.info)**

### **Chemicals**

Always read and practise health and safety guidelines. Some chemicals may cause cancer if you breathe them in or get them on your skin.