



BE CLEAR  
ON CANCER

# Cancer

Cancer is a group of conditions where cells in a specific part of the body grow and reproduce uncontrollably.

More than one in three people will develop some form of cancer during their lifetime in the UK. There are more than 200 different types of cancer.

The four most common types of cancer are lung cancer, breast cancer, prostate cancer and bowel cancer.



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## Risk factors

**Smoking**– Smoking is far by the most preventable cause of cancer. It is responsible for 1 in 4 UK cancer deaths, and nearly a fifth of all cancer cases.

**Viruses and bacteria**– It's important to remember that cancer isn't infectious and cannot be caught from someone. However there are a number of different viruses that are thought to influence the development of cancer, by causing genetic changes to cells, making them more likely to become cancerous.

**Environmental cancers**– One of the main environment causes of cancer is natural radiation, for example from the sun. Another example is radon, a natural occurring gas that is found in the rock in certain parts of the UK. Radon has been linked to the development of lung cancer.

**Overweight and obesity**– People who are obese may have an increased risk of several types of cancer, including cancers of the breast, colon, thyroid, kidney and gallbladder.

**Alcohol**– Alcohol is responsible for around 4% of cancers in the UK each year (12,500 cases). Regularly drinking up to a pint of premium lager or a large glass of wine a day can increase the risk of mouth, upper throat, oesophageal (food pipe), breast and bowel cancers. These drinks both include about 3 units of alcohol.

## Can Cancer be Prevented?

More than **350,000 people** are diagnosed each other with cancer. Experts estimate that more than 4 in 10 cancer cases could be prevented, largely through lifestyle changes, such as :

**Not smoking**– The sooner you give up smoking, the better. Ten years after you've stopped smoking , your lung cancer risk is half that of someone whose continued to smoke. **NHS smoke free** helps thousands of people quit smoking every year.



### Reducing alcohol intake-

The less alcohol you drink, the lower the risk of cancer. No type of alcohol is better or worse than another, it is the alcohol itself that leads to the damage, regardless of whether it is in wine, beer or spirits. And drinking and smoking together are even worse for you.

**Keep a healthy weight-** Keeping a healthy weight is important, because obesity is the second biggest preventable cause of cancer after smoking. To help keep a healthy weight for good, it's important to form long-term healthy habits, including eating a balanced diet and being physically active regularly. A healthy balanced diet with plenty of fibre, fruit and vegetables and less red and processed meat can reduce cancer risk.



**Enjoying the sun safely-** Whatever your age, the best way to enjoy the sun safely and protect your skin from sunburn is to use a combination of shade, clothing and sunscreen. Spend time in the shade, cover up and use a sunscreen.