

Irish Cancer Prevention Network



Newsletter December 2020

Welcome to the first edition of the Irish Cancer Prevention Network (ICPN) newsletter. This quarterly newsletter will share with you the facts behind cancer prevention messages and learning from cancer prevention initiatives. It also provides an avenue for you to link with the ICPN for support with your own cancer prevention work. We hope to grow the network further and continue working towards preventing cancer attributable to modifiable risk factors in Ireland.

ICPN Steps to Reduce your Cancer Risk: Facts

Each ICPN newsletter features information about modifiable risk factors for cancer. As this first issue coincides with publication of the World Health Organization factsheet "[Alcohol and Cancer in the WHO European Region: an appeal for better prevention](#)", we will focus on the relationship between alcohol and cancer.

Alcohol and Cancer ^{1, 2, 3}

Alcohol consumption increases the risk of 7 types of cancer: bowel, breast, larynx, liver, mouth, oesophagus and throat.

How?

- Alcohol breaks down in the body into a toxic chemical called acetaldehyde which can damage DNA within our cells and prevent the body's natural ability to repair this damage, resulting in the development of cancer cells.
- Alcohol can impair the body's ability to absorb important protective nutrients, including vitamins A, C, D and E and folate.
- Alcohol can increase the levels of some hormones in the body, such as oestrogen, thereby increasing the risk of breast cancer.

ALCOHOL

For cancer prevention, it's best not to drink alcohol. If you must drink alcohol stay below the recommended low risk guidelines. Be aware there is no safe limit of alcohol for cancer prevention.

Alcohol aids the movement of cancer-causing substances from cigarettes through the body, especially to the mouth, head and neck.



Is there a safe amount that I can drink?

While there is no 'safe' level of alcohol consumption, the risk of alcohol related cancer, and other diseases, can be reduced by following low-risk alcohol consumption guidelines:

- Less than 11 standard drinks per week for women
- Less than 17 standard drinks per week for men

Smoking and Drinking Alcohol

If you smoke and drink alcohol, your risk of getting cancer is even higher because alcohol helps to transfer cancer-causing substances from cigarettes through the body, especially to the mouth, head and neck. People who both smoke and drink alcohol have a 30 times increased risk of developing cancers of the mouth, larynx and oesophagus, compared to people who use either alcohol or tobacco alone³.

Further support

The HSE Alcohol Programme aims to bring national leadership and focus to alcohol harm reduction and to support people to improve their health and wellbeing by implementing evidence based policies as outlined in the Healthy Ireland framework. There are strong social and cultural norms around alcohol consumption that are deeply embedded in Irish society and that cannot be changed through short-term action.

The HSE Alcohol Campaign www.askaboutalcohol.ie offers A-Z information on alcohol and provides free resources at www.healthpromotion.ie/alcohol.

ICPN Cancer Prevention Initiatives

Smoking Cessation: The Last Stop

HSE Quit launched the 'Last Stop' campaign in January 2020. The campaign lets people know that if they stop smoking for 28 days, they are five times more likely to quit for good.

People who smoke told QUIT that they wanted them to break down the challenge of quitting smoking. They wanted information about how to quit as well as why. The Last Stop lets people know that they can quit if they get the support they need to succeed and commit to quit for at least a month.

Between January 2020 (when the 'Last Stop' campaign was launched) and December 2020, QUIT have seen a 45% increase in people signing up for online Quit plans.

Your Health Your Choice

The Marie Keating Foundation is launching an updated 'Your Health Your Choice' cancer prevention campaign in January 2021.

"[Your Health, Your Choice](#)" campaign aims to increase awareness of cancer prevention and provide information on how making small changes each day can help to lower your risk of developing cancer in the future. The campaign focuses on the promotion of seven key pillars of cancer prevention. These pillars are diet, physical activity & exercise, sun safety, smoking cessation, limiting alcohol intake, and two new pillars which are cancer screening and vaccinations when it comes to cancer prevention.

To see more about how our daily lifestyle choices impact our cancer risk and to stay up to date on our [Your Health, Your Choice](#) relaunch in the New Year, visit www.mariekeating.ie.

The ICPN provide an avenue for you to promote your own cancer prevention initiatives. If you want support for your project contact prevention@cancercontrol.ie

Cancer Prevention Awareness Days:

Dates for your Diary January – March 2021

- Cervical Cancer Awareness Week 18th January 2021 – 24th January 2021
- World Cancer Day 4th February 2021
- Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month March 2021
- HPV Awareness Day 4th March 2021
- No Smoking Day 13th March 2021

Cancer Prevention Learning

- The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) published their [World Cancer Report: Cancer Research for Cancer Prevention](#) earlier this year. This comprehensive publication describes multiple aspects of cancer prevention and outlines the underpinning research, focusing on research activity during the past 5 years.
- The ICPN held their “Learning from the Past – Planning for the Future” webinar on Tuesday, September 8th, 2020. The webinar included talks on Smoking, Obesity, HPV and Alcohol in relation to cancer prevention, as well as outlining the plan for the future of the ICPN. If you missed the webinar or want to catch up you can view the talks [here](#).
- Research outlining [Public Health Messaging and Strategies to Promote “SWIFT” Lung Cancer Detection](#) was recently published in Ireland and will be used to inform the design and delivery of early detection initiatives.
- The National Cancer Registry Ireland (NCRI) published their report “[Modifiable risk factors and cancer in Ireland](#)”, highlighting the potential for cancer prevention in Ireland. At a conservative estimate, 6,240 newly diagnosed cancer cases (29% of all invasive cancers) in 2016 in Ireland were potentially preventable through changes to modifiable risk factors such as alcohol consumption or smoking.

It is essential that we continue to strengthen work in cancer prevention to reduce the serious impact of cancer on the lives of thousands of people in Ireland.

The ICPN provides an avenue to collaborate and identify opportunities to work together to prevent cancer for current and future generations. We aim to support implementation of the [National Cancer Strategy](#) cancer prevention recommendations

Please contact the ICPN for support with your cancer prevention ideas, initiatives or research at prevention@cancercontrol.ie

References

1. Wild, C., Weiderpass, E. and Stewart, B., 2020. World Cancer Report: Cancer Research For Cancer Prevention. Lyon, France: International Agency for Research on Cancer.
2. World Cancer Research Fund/American Institute for Cancer Research, 2018. Alcoholic drinks and the risk of cancer. Continuous Update Project Expert Report.
3. World Health Organisation, 2020. Alcohol and cancer in the WHO European Region: an appeal for better prevention. Copenhagen: WHO Regional Office for Europe.