



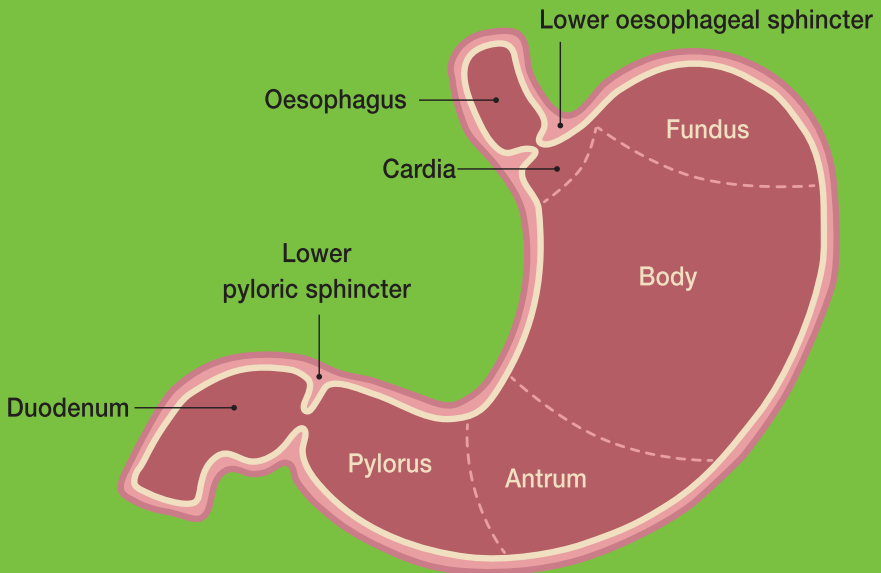
World Cancer
Research Fund
Hong Kong

世界癌症研究基金會(香港)

REDUCING YOUR RISK OF Stomach Cancer



Cancer is a term used to describe a group of more than 200 diseases that affect different areas of the body. Research has shown that many types of cancer are linked to our diet and lifestyle, which means there are steps we can take to help prevent them. This leaflet is about reducing your risk of stomach cancer (also known as gastric cancer).



What is stomach cancer?

Stomach cancer, also known as gastric cancer, usually develops in the cells of the stomach lining. The most common type of stomach cancer is adenocarcinoma, which accounts for more than 90 per cent of all stomach cancer cases in Hong Kong.

Cancer develops as a result of damaged cells, which can grow uncontrollably to form a tumour. Many different factors contribute to the development of stomach cancer. Stomach cancer almost always develops in the glands and ducts that produce digestive juice.

There are some important factors that we can influence, such as our everyday diet and lifestyle choices that can affect our risk of stomach cancer. This leaflet will help you understand the choices you can make to help reduce your risk.

Who is most at risk?

In Hong Kong, around 1,000 new cases of stomach cancer are diagnosed each year, with more men than women being affected. In 2007, stomach cancer was the sixth most common cancer and the fourth most common cause of cancer death in Hong Kong.

As with all cancers, the risk of developing stomach cancer depends on a number of factors and varies from person to person. Many of the factors that increase our chances of developing the disease are linked to our way of life. This means there are changes we can make to help reduce our risk.

Lifestyle risk factors

- ◆ High intake of salt and salt-preserved foods
- ◆ A diet low in fruits and vegetables
- ◆ Smoking, and other use of and exposure to, tobacco



The good news is that there are simple changes we can make that can help to reduce our risk.

Other risk factors include:

- **Age** – those aged over 50 are at an increased risk
- **Gender** – men are twice as likely to develop the disease than women
- ***Helicobacter pylori*** – previous infection with this bacteria increases the risk of developing stomach cancer
- **Pernicious anaemia** – people who have this condition may be at a higher risk
- **Polyps** – people who have polyps (growths) are more likely to develop this cancer
- **Long-term stomach inflammation** (chronic gastritis)
- **Family history** – those with several close relatives who have stomach cancer are at a higher risk

If any of these apply to you, it does not mean that you will develop stomach cancer – it just means that your risk may be higher than average. The important thing to remember is that you can make positive lifestyle changes at any age to help reduce your risk.

Reducing your risk

In 2007, the World Cancer Research Fund global network published its Second Expert Report on preventing cancer: *Food, Nutrition, Physical Activity, and the Prevention of Cancer: a Global Perspective*. This Report reviewed the findings of over 7,000 scientific studies on food, nutrition, physical activity and body weight in relation to cancer prevention.

The Report looked at 17 different cancer types, and found that there are steps we can all take to reduce our risk – including lowering our risk of developing stomach cancer. Making healthy lifestyle choices, like choosing a healthy diet and not smoking, can help lower our chances of developing the disease. These are the key things we can do to reduce our risk:

Choose a healthy diet



There is substantial evidence supporting the link between salt intake and stomach cancer. That's why WCRF HK **recommends limiting intake of salt and salt-preserved foods** – aim for less than 6 grams of salt intake (or 2,400mg of sodium) per day. Six grams of salt is approximately one level teaspoonful. This should include not only the salt added in the cooking process but also the salt that is “hidden” in foods, especially processed and packaged foods. The majority of the salt we eat is already in the food we buy; **try replacing processed foods with more fresh, whole foods and homemade dishes to reduce the amount of salt you consume.**



Try to include more vegetables and fruits in your diet. Evidence shows that **vegetables, including especially allium vegetables** (such as garlic, leeks and onions) **and fruits** probably protect against stomach cancer, so we should aim for at least five portions a day.

As part of a healthy diet we should also include **wholegrains** (such as brown rice and wholegrain bread) **and pulses** (such as soy bean and red kidney bean), which contain dietary fibre and other nutrients.



Symptoms to look out for

If you have any of these symptoms for more than four weeks, visit your doctor. In many cases, they are caused by something less serious, but it's important to have a check-up.

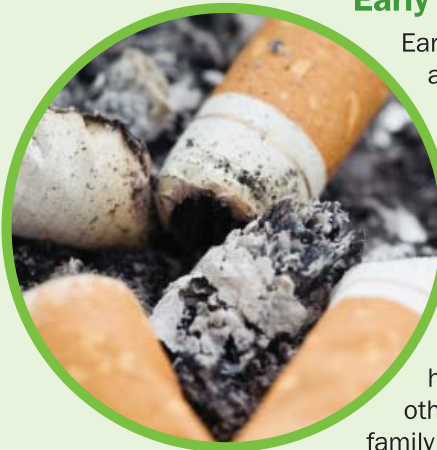
- ◆ Persistent indigestion or heartburn
- ◆ Loss of appetite
- ◆ Unexplained weight loss and tiredness
- ◆ Difficulty in swallowing
- ◆ Stomach pain
- ◆ Belching
- ◆ Bloating (especially after eating)
- ◆ Sense of fullness even after a small meal
- ◆ Nausea or vomiting
- ◆ Tar-coloured stool



Early detection

Early symptoms of stomach cancer are not obvious. Many patients may consider them as stomach upset and take them lightly, which can delay diagnosis and treatment. The majority of the cases can be successfully treated if they are detected early.

If you are at a higher risk of stomach cancer (for example, if you have *Helicobacter pylori* infection and other stomach diseases, or you have a family history of stomach cancer), it is best to consult your doctor to determine if regular screening is appropriate.



Finding out more

WCRF HK also provides information on reducing the risk of other cancers – as well as practical advice on **choosing a balanced diet, being physically active and maintaining a healthy weight.**

Research shows that about a third of the most common cancers could be prevented by making healthy choices in these three areas. Visit www.wcrf-hk.org or call us on (+852) 2529 5025 to find out more.



Getting involved!

There are many ways you can support the work of WCRF HK. Visit www.wcrf-hk.org or call our fundraising team on (+852) 2529 5025 to find out more.



About WCRF HK

WCRF HK is the principal HK charity dedicated to the prevention of cancer through the promotion of healthy diet and nutrition, physical activity and weight management. WCRF HK is committed to providing cancer research and education programmes which expand our understanding of the importance of our food and lifestyle choices in the cancer process.

By spreading the good news that cancer is largely preventable, WCRF HK hopes that many thousands of lives will be saved. The education and research programmes of WCRF HK are funded almost entirely by donations from the public.

This leaflet gives information based on WCRF HK's Recommendations for Cancer Prevention developed from the Second Expert Report: *Food, Nutrition, Physical Activity, and the Prevention of Cancer: a Global Perspective* (2007). This Report, produced by the WCRF global network, is the largest study of its kind ever published and its Recommendations are based on the most comprehensive review of all the available evidence. WCRF HK is committed to interpreting scientific research in the field of food, nutrition, physical activity and cancer prevention and to translating the results into meaningful and practical advice for the public to follow.

This leaflet is made possible by a donation made in memory of the late Ms. Winnie Law who had stomach cancer and sadly passed away in early 2010. WCRF HK would like to thank Ms. Winnie Law's family and friends sincerely for their generosity and support of our cancer prevention work.

WCRF HK relies totally on donations from the general public to continue its cancer prevention work. Why not join us in the fight against cancer like Ms. Law's family and friends? Call us now on (+852) 2529 5025 or visit www.wcrf-hk.org to find out the many ways you can support the work of WCRF HK.

Did you know that many cases of cancer could be prevented? For more practical information on choosing a healthy diet, managing your weight and becoming more active to help reduce your risk, visit our website:

www.wcrf-hk.org

WCRF HK's Recommendations for Cancer Prevention

- 1 Be as lean as possible without becoming underweight
- 2 Be physically active for at least 30 minutes every day
- 3 Avoid sugary drinks. Limit consumption of energy-dense foods (particularly processed foods high in added sugar, or low in fibre, or high in fat)
- 4 Eat more of a variety of vegetables, fruits, wholegrains, and pulses such as beans
- 5 Limit consumption of red meats (such as beef, pork and lamb) and avoid processed meats
- 6 If consumed at all, limit alcoholic drinks to 2 for men and 1 for women a day
- 7 Limit consumption of salty foods and foods processed with salt (sodium)
- 8 Don't use supplements to protect against cancer

Special Population Recommendations

- 9 It is best for mothers to breastfeed exclusively for up to 6 months and then add other liquids and foods
- 10 After treatment, cancer survivors should follow the Recommendations for Cancer Prevention

And, always remember – do not smoke or chew tobacco

WCRF HK is part of the WCRF global network

World Cancer Research Fund Hong Kong (WCRF HK)
Room 601, On Hong Commercial Bldg.,
145 Hennessy Road, Wanchai, Hong Kong
Tel: (+852) 2529 5025 Fax: (+852) 2520 5202
Web: www.wcrf-hk.org

“Stopping cancer before it starts”