

The best advice is to eat a diet low in fat, but high in fibre and with plenty of vegetables and fruit. It's best to drink alcohol in moderation and to reduce the amount of salted, pickled and smoked foods. It's also important to keep to a healthy weight-studies show that there is a higher risk of cancer in people who are overweight.

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### Volunteers needed to help women with breast cancer

The NSW Cancer Council needs Arabic, Italian and Mandarin or Cantonese speaking women to be volunteers with the Breast Cancer Support Service. The service offers support to women with a diagnosis of breast cancer. Volunteers need to speak some English and to have experienced breast cancer at least two years previously. Women interested in joining this important service should contact:

Kathy Harris - (02) 9334 1751.

Telephone numbers are correct at time of publication but are not continually updated. You may need to check the numbers in the telephone directory.

## The Myths About Cancer

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NSW Multicultural Health Communication Service

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**NSW HEALTH**  
DEPARTMENT

Although cancer is serious, many people become unnecessarily afraid of this disease because they think it's incurable. This just isn't true. Understanding more about cancer helps remove some of the fear – and teaches us how to help prevent it. Here are some common misunderstandings:

### **Cancer is Always Fatal**

It's not. More than 50 per cent of cancers can be successfully treated. For some cancers, the success rate is very high. Rates for survival of childhood cancer are increasing, with 75 per cent of children surviving childhood cancer. It's important to remember that cancer is more likely to be treated successfully if it's detected early. This is why you need to see a doctor promptly about any symptoms you are concerned about, and to have regular check ups for cancer where possible. People over 40, with a family history of bowel cancer, for instance, can have a test to check for early signs of the disease. All women aged 18 to 70 need regular pap tests every two years to check for cervical cancer, while women over 50 need mammograms every two years to check for breast cancer.

A mammogram can find a cancer as small as a grain of rice, months or even years before a woman could have felt the lump herself.

There are some checks you can do yourself. Women can check their own breasts each month for signs of changes, for instance. Everyone can get to know all the different marks and spots on their skin so they can report any change of colour, size or shape of any new or existing spot to their doctor – most cases of skin cancer can be successfully treated if detected early.

### **Cancer is Catching**

Some people worry that they can catch cancer from other people, especially if the cancer is around the genital area (eg cervical cancer in women or testicular and prostate cancer in men). But this isn't true. Cancer isn't a disease that is transmitted to other people.

### **If a Pap Test for Cervical Cancer shows Abnormal Cells, It Means a Woman has Cancer.**

Not true. The Pap Test detects abnormal changes in cells so that they can be treated *before* they have a chance to become cancerous.

### **Cancer Can be Caused by an Injury or a Blow to the Body.**

Women are sometimes concerned that a hit to the breast can cause cancer, for instance. However there is no evidence that this is true. But sometimes a blow to part of the body makes you more aware of that area and therefore more likely to notice an unusual symptom such as a lump or a mark.

### **Cancer is a Punishment for Something You Have done Wrong.**

This is quite untrue. Nor is it true that thinking, reading or talking about cancer can cause the disease.

### **There are special diets that can cure cancer**

Unfortunately there's no proof that any diet will cure cancer. However, what you eat may reduce the risk of developing cancer.