



## Bowel cancer awareness

### Saving lives through early detection



***Bowel Cancer Awareness Month, an annual initiative of Bowel Cancer Australia, is running throughout the month of June to raise public awareness of a disease that claims the lives of 80 Australians every week.***

Bowel cancer is the third most common type of newly diagnosed cancer in Australia with 1 in 13 Australians developing the disease in their lifetime. It affects men and women, young and old. It is one of the top five causes of premature death among Australians aged 45-74, and is the seventh leading cause of death among those aged 25-44.

Around 25% of people who develop bowel cancer have either a hereditary contribution, family history or a combination of both. The other 75% of people have no family history of the disease and no hereditary contribution.

Bowel cancer is one of the most treatable types of cancer if found early. 90% of bowel cancer cases can be treated successfully, however fewer than 40% are detected early enough.

#### **Symptoms**

Early bowel cancer has no symptoms, which is why screening is so important. As a cancerous tumour grows, it can narrow and block the bowel. In some cases, blood loss from the tumour can lead to anaemia (low red blood cell count), resulting in symptoms such as weakness, severe fatigue and weight loss.

Additional warning signs may include:

- ▶ Bleeding from the rectum
- ▶ Blood in the stool or in the toilet after a bowel movement
- ▶ A change in bowel habits, especially if severe (including diarrhoea, constipation or the feeling of incomplete emptying)
- ▶ A change in the shape or appearance of the stool (e.g., more narrow than usual)
- ▶ Lower abdominal pain
- ▶ Pain or a lump in the anus or rectum

Any of the above symptoms could be indicative of bowel cancer and should be investigated by your GP if they persist for more than two weeks.

#### **Reducing your risk**

Healthy diet and lifestyle choices, as well as screening and surveillance, can help to reduce your bowel cancer risk. Evidence reveals quitting smoking, abstaining from or limiting alcohol consumption, and eating foods containing dietary fibre (e.g. fruit, vegetables) are all beneficial. Maintaining a healthy weight and engaging in regular physical activity have also been shown to reduce risk.

#### **Bowel cancer screening**

Bowel cancer screening is safe and easy and can be done at home. It is medically recommended that people aged 50 and over who do not have a family or personal history of bowel cancer should screen using a Faecal Occult Blood Test (FOBT) every two years. If you have a family history of bowel cancer or are concerned about your risk, speak to your GP.

The at-home test is used to collect samples of bowel motions, which are then analysed to detect tiny traces of blood, invisible to the naked eye. The screening test cannot diagnose bowel cancer, but the results will indicate whether a further test (usually a colonoscopy) is needed to rule out bowel cancer.

By 2020, Australia will have a National Bowel Cancer Screening Program (NBCSP), whereby people aged 50-74 will receive a taxpayer funded screening test in the mail every two years. For people ineligible to participate in the government program, a BowelScreen Australia screening test can be purchased from participating pharmacies or through Bowel Cancer Australia.

# Fats – the good, the bad and the in-between

## Monounsaturated

**Good or bad?** This is one of the good guys.

**Found in?** Avocado, most nuts, olive oil, peanut and canola oil.

**The low down** – countries such as Greece that eat a Mediterranean diet high in monounsaturated fats have a lower rate of heart disease in comparison to countries which eat a diet high in saturated fats.

## Polyunsaturated

**Good or bad?** Good. These are essential fats required for normal body functions.

**Found in?** Fatty fish such as salmon, sardines and mackerel. Also flaxseeds, walnuts, canola oil and sunflower seeds.

**The low down** – polyunsaturated fats are essential fats that are required to build cell membranes and nerve coverings. They are needed for blood clotting, muscle movement, and inflammation.

*Remember, although some fats are healthier than others, all fats have the same capacity to increase your body weight for the simple reason that fat has more kilojoules per gram compared to other nutrients.*

## Saturated

**Good or bad?** Eat in moderation.

**Found in?** Red meat, butter, cream and cheese.

**The low down** – a diet rich in saturated fats can drive up total cholesterol, and tip the balance toward more harmful LDL cholesterol, which prompts blockages to form in arteries in the heart and elsewhere in the body. Replace saturated fats with healthier fats like vegetable oils or high-fibre carbohydrates to reduce your risk of heart disease.

## Trans fat

**Good or bad?** Stay away from these baddies. Trans fats have no known health benefits. They are artificially modified and added to processed foods for a longer shelf life.

**Found in?** Cakes, biscuits and deep fried takeaway foods.

**The low down** – eating foods rich in trans fats increases the amount of harmful LDL cholesterol in the blood stream and reduces the amount of beneficial HDL cholesterol.



## Mixed berry overnight oats recipe

These overnight oats are perfect for busy mornings and quick grab-and-go breakfasts. Oats are one of the best forms of resistance starch which digests slowly, are packed with fibre and help to stabilise blood sugar levels.

### Serves 1

- ▶ ¼ cup (25g) old-fashioned oats (avoid instant)
- ▶ ½ cup (120g) plain Greek yogurt
- ▶ ¼ cup (60mL) nonfat milk (or substitute, almond milk, soy milk, rice milk, oat milk, etc.)
- ▶ 1 tsp cinnamon (or other spices like cardamom or vanilla extract)
- ▶ ¼ cup (35g) strawberries, diced
- ▶ ¼ cup (35g) blueberries

### Instructions:

Add all of the ingredients to a container and stir until fully combined. Cover and refrigerate for at least 8 hours or overnight. Serve cold.

### Optional toppings:

Add any toppings you like. Some ideas include almonds, hazelnuts, walnuts, cashew nuts, flax seeds, chia seeds, raisins, all kinds of berries, fruits like banana, cherries, apples or pears, sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds, nut butters, coconut flakes, the list goes on.



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