

# 8. Staying healthy & preventing illness

In Australia, the health system is involved in treating and preventing illness and promoting health and well being.

## Health checks throughout life

In many parts of the world doctors and health professionals are only seen when illness has occurred. In Australia, babies, children and adults are encouraged to see their doctor for an annual health check-up. This is to help us stay healthy. If needed, the doctor can advise how we can stay healthy and point out areas for improving our lifestyle. An annual health check can help prevent the onset of chronic illness like diabetes. You should see your family doctor (GP) for an annual health check.

## Prevent communicable diseases

- communicable diseases are diseases passed on by another person, an insect, an animal or from the environment. The best way to prevent disease is vaccination where available, hand washing and good personal hygiene
- Australia has a national immunisation program that provides immunisation to at risk population groups such as children free of charge. Ask your family doctor (GP) for more information about this program
- examples of diseases passed from person to person include measles and sexually transmissible infections
- to prevent food poisoning it is important to wash hands before handling foods, and wash kitchen utensils frequently. Keep cold food in the fridge and refrigerate leftovers. Separate raw and cooked foods and reheat thoroughly
- Queensland is a sub-tropical to tropical state, which means diseases that are spread by mosquitoes are common, for example Dengue Fever. It is important to be aware of ways to reduce exposure to mosquitoes and make your home safe from mosquito breeding areas.

## Alcohol, tobacco and other drugs

- the use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs has a significant effect on our community. As well as contributing to health conditions like heart disease and cancer, the use and misuse of these substances harms individuals and families
- quitting smoking and drinking responsibly can protect your health and prevent disease and injury
- Queensland has the toughest tobacco laws in Australia – it is illegal to smoke inside workplaces, restaurants, pubs and clubs. There is no-smoking in outdoor public places like patrolled beaches, children's playground equipment, major sports stadiums and within four metres of non-residential building entrances. Queensland Health facilities like hospitals and community health centres are also smoke-free
- laws also apply to people who sell tobacco in stores and in premises with a liquor-license. If you are in this type of business or intending to go into business, it is important to understand these laws. Information is available from the Tobacco Hotline **1800 005 998** or visit the Queensland Health website: [www.health.qld.gov.au/atods/tobaccolaws/](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/atods/tobaccolaws/)

### Alcohol and drug information

Alcohol and Drug Information Service  
**1800 177 833** (24 hours)

#### Quit smoking

**13 QUIT 137 848** (24 hours)

#### Interpreters

For both these phone lines, if you need an interpreter, tell the operators your language, name and phone number and you will be called back with a phone interpreter.



### Interpreters

- you have a right to a professional interpreter if you need one, when you use a Queensland Health public service
- interpreters can be provided either in person or by phone at no charge
- it is Queensland Health policy to use friends and relatives only in emergency situations. If the friend or relative is less than 18 years old they should not be used as an interpreter under any circumstance
- please request a professional interpreter in advance so arrangements can be made for your appointment.

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# 8. Staying healthy & preventing illness

## Australian alcohol guidelines – one drink is not always one drink

A standard drink is any drink containing 10 grams of alcohol. Due to the different ways that alcohol can affect people, **there is no amount of alcohol that can be said to be safe for everyone.**

For more information visit the website: [www.alcohol.gov.au](http://www.alcohol.gov.au)



 1.8 180ml Average restaurant serve of wine 12% Alc./Vol	 1.5 375ml Full strength beer 4.9% Alc./Vol	 1.5 375ml Pre-mix spirits 5% Alc./Vol
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**Australian alcohol guidelines**

*For men:*  
No more than 4 standard drinks a day on average; and no more than 6 standard drinks on any one day. One or two alcohol-free days per week.

*For women:*  
No more than 2 standard drinks a day on average; and no more than 4 standard drinks on any one day. One or two alcohol-free days per week.

Call **1800 177 833** if you need help with an alcohol problem.

Source: Australian Alcohol Guidelines [www.alcohol.gov.au](http://www.alcohol.gov.au)

## Eat well and be active

In Australia, unhealthy eating and lack of physical activity causes many health problems. Many children and adults are overweight and this contributes greatly to the development of some diseases such as diabetes and heart disease. The traditional eating patterns of many immigrants are much healthier than the fast foods and drinks, which are heavily advertised in Australia. The following guidelines can help to keep your family healthy:

- eat 2 serves of fruit and 5 serves of vegetables every day
- eat plenty of cereal foods including rice, breads, pasta and noodles. Wholemeal is best
- drink plenty of water instead of sweetened drinks like soft drinks, cordial or sweet tea. In Australia it is safe to drink water from household taps
- avoid foods and drinks high in sugar, like soft drinks, confectionary, cakes and biscuits
- avoid deep fried and other fatty foods like pies, pizza, hamburgers and chocolate
- choose foods low in salt and do not add extra salt
- do at least 30 minutes of physical activity on most, preferably all, days. You can break it down into three lots of ten minutes of activity. Kids need to do more physical activity than adults – they need at least 60 minutes of activity each day. Physical activity is important for their growth and development. Examples are walking, riding a bicycle or playing sports.

Breastfeeding is the best way to feed your baby. Give breast milk and nothing else to your baby until around six months. Healthy solid food can be given at six months but continue to breastfeed your baby until at least 12 months.

## Educate yourself and your children

Learning more about staying healthy is important for children and adults. Children may receive some education about health at school. However, educating yourself and your children about healthy lifestyle choices is an important role as a parent. There is a lot of information available about staying healthy in different languages and also about managing health conditions.

The internet is a good place to get this information: [www.health.qld.gov.au/multicultural](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/multicultural)

This factsheet is part of a series of 10. The complete set comprises:

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