

Spotting cancer early saves lives



CANCER
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UK

Together we will beat cancer

Take charge

You might be reading this leaflet because you'd like to know about spotting the symptoms of cancer. Perhaps someone you know has had it, or maybe you're just curious. Whatever your situation, you'll find information about when to talk to your doctor, tips for getting the most out of your appointment, and some key facts about screening.

Cancer is much more common in people over 50, but it can affect anyone of any age. If something looks or feels unusual, remember – you're in charge. In most cases it won't be cancer, but if it is, finding it at an early stage can make a real difference.



Listen to your body

You know your body best, so take action if something doesn't look or feel quite right or won't go away. And don't assume unusual changes are down to 'just getting older', or part of another health condition.

Long-lasting heartburn or indigestion

Unusual breast changes such as any change in the size, shape or feel of a breast, including any nipple or skin changes

A change in bowel habit, such as constipation, looser poo or pooing more often

Persistent bloating

Unexplained vaginal bleeding, including after sex, between periods or after the menopause

Blood in your poo (stools)

Blood in your pee (urine)

Problems peeing

Croaky voice or hoarseness that won't go away

Mouth or tongue ulcer that lasts longer than three weeks

Coughing up blood

Persistent cough

Breathlessness

Difficulty swallowing

Very heavy night sweats

A sore that won't heal

Appetite loss

Unexplained weight loss

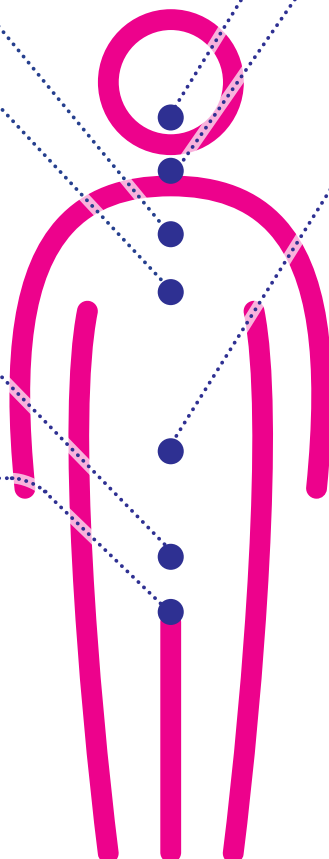
A new mole or changes to a mole

An unexplained pain or ache

An unusual lump or swelling anywhere on your body

Fatigue (feeling more tired than usual)

If you do notice any of these symptoms, or something else unusual, it's good to talk about it, so make an appointment to chat to your doctor.



Talk to your doctor

When you're worried that there's something wrong, telling a doctor can seem difficult.

Here are some ideas for how to get the most out of your appointment, whether it's via phone, video or a face to face conversation.



Be honest. Tell the doctor about anything unusual, even if it doesn't seem that important or you think it might be a bit embarrassing.



Be thorough. Mention all your symptoms and don't put it down to 'just getting older', or another health condition. If it's something that's bothering you, then your doctor will want to hear about it.



Stick with it. Don't worry you might be wasting your doctor's time. Even if you've spoken to them already, they want to know if your symptoms haven't gone away, or if something still doesn't feel quite right.



Be prepared. Think about how to describe any changes and how long you've had them for. Writing down what you want to say can help. It can also be useful to have a list of any medications that you take, including over-the-counter or herbal remedies.

Experienced any of the listed symptoms? You could highlight or circle them on the previous page and show it to your doctor.

Look out for your screening invitation

Screening is for people who don't have any symptoms. There are three national cancer screening programmes in the UK: breast, bowel and cervical.

To be invited for screening, you need to be registered with a GP. When you receive your screening invitation, you'll also be sent information about the screening test. It's important you read this, so you can decide if you'd like to take part.

People become eligible for the different screening tests at different ages. Visit [cruk.org/screening](https://www.cruk.org/screening) for more information.

Even if you've been screened, and no matter what age you are, it's important to tell your doctor if you notice anything that's not normal for you.

Early diagnosis saves lives

What if it is cancer? When cancer's spotted at an early stage, treatment is more likely to be successful. Thanks to research, treatments are now kinder and more effective than ever. And survival is on the up.

How to find out more

We're online...



Find out more about spotting cancer early, including information about cancer screening across the UK, at [cruk.org/spotcancerearly](https://www.cruk.org/spotcancerearly)

...and on the phone



Our Nurse Helpline is there if you're looking for information or support. Just call **0808 800 4040**.

If you'd like to provide any feedback on this leaflet or would like to know more about the information sources used in creating it, please email publications@cancer.org.uk

And if you have any questions about Cancer Research UK or would like to support what we're doing, you can call **0300 123 1022**.