

Early Presentation of Cancer Symptoms:

My Job?

YES

NO



unique improvements

Thank you for saying YES.

We all have a part to play to support earlier presentation of cancer symptoms.

Most of us have regular contact with patients and clients. All of us have friends, work colleagues and family members with whom we can share key messages.

By increasing your own awareness of cancer symptoms and screening and using it to talk about the importance of earlier presentation, you can help make a big difference and save lives.

If you work in any of the following areas, this resource spells out how, in more detail;

Reception at GP surgeries and health clinics,

Social Care staff,

Pharmacy staff,

Health Trainer and Healthy Lifestyle teams.

Early Presentation of Cancer Symptoms

Support Guide for Frontline Staff

“Up to 10,000 lives every year in the UK can be saved if efforts to promote earlier diagnosis and treatment of cancer are successful”

Think again.

Perhaps at first thought you don't think it is part of your role?

What if you knew you could help save up to 10,000 lives in the UK every year, just by arming yourself with simple information and sharing it in everyday conversations with patients, clients, friends and colleagues?

Read on a few pages and keep an open mind.

This resource will give you simple ways to make a difference which fit into your every day job.

Early Presentation of Cancer Symptoms

Support Guide for Frontline Staff

“As a Manager I think it is very important for my staff to take part in this work. Such simple steps make a huge difference.”

All of the evidence tells us that if we increase efforts to improve earlier presentation and diagnosis of cancer, it saves lives.

We need to increase awareness of cancer symptoms and encourage people into services.

As staff working across health and social care you have the chance to help.

All of you, to a greater or lesser extent, come into contact with the public and can reinforce this simple message.

We know that cancer can sometimes be a difficult and emotive subject. However, the earlier presentation message is positive and it saves lives! This resource is not about preparing for the worst or diagnosing people. It is designed to help you rehearse what the common symptoms of cancer are and ways you can share that information with others.

“Worldwide, about a third of all cancers are estimated to be amenable to early detection and potential cure with treatment. If cancer is detected early... a significant number of cancer patients can be cured or have their lives prolonged significantly. Without early detection, treatment costs rise substantially, resources are used inefficiently and the need for palliative care services increases unnecessarily.”

We have designed this resource after talking to experts, patients, managers and most importantly to staff.

It is practical and easy to follow. It focuses on Bowel Cancer and Lung Cancer but its suggestions can help across other cancers and there are links to further information.

You will find out;

- **how you can fit it into your every day roles,**
- **what the common symptoms are,**
- **what common risk factors can lead to cancer,**
- **how Bowel Cancer screening works,**
- **links to training,**
- **some simple resources to print and use,**
- **what local services exist to help.**

Cumbria and South Lancashire Cancer Network have produced this resource to support staff. We plan to regularly update it so that it covers more cancers and more staff groups.

Unfortunately, delays in seeking help about possible cancer symptoms sometimes take place because of 'practitioner delays'. Thankfully stories about people needing to come to services several times before they are finally

diagnosed are rare but we need to make sure they are rarer still. Delays because of people themselves are still too common and are greater in some communities because of the increased barriers they face. Some of our most disadvantaged communities face the biggest barriers and show the longest delays in seeking help. We need to change that.



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Spotting symptoms is not rocket science; it is simply looking after ourselves and watching out for changes in our body.

We do this everyday for our own well-being. If something isn't right; getting it checked out earlier means any problems can be treated quicker.

Our clients and patients tell us about changes in their body and look to our advice about getting them checked out.

This resource describes simple steps to support staff to help clients help themselves.

“Some of our communities have additional barriers which add to delayed help seeking.”

Want to find out more about how this resource was designed and the social marketing approach underpinning it?

More about how this resource was developed

Lancashire and South Cumbria Cancer Network identified a need to support front line staff to promote awareness of cancer and the importance of early detection among the public.

Local research on brief opportunistic interventions highlighted how increasing the knowledge and skills of staff can have a direct impact on their own behaviour, those of their family and friends as well as supporting clients and patients.

A social marketing firm, Unique Improvements was commissioned to develop a flexible resource for front line staff groups in the first instance. The intention being to share learning and spread to other staff groups and cancer types.

Lancashire and South Cumbria
Cancer Network



unique improvements

A range of evidence, secondary research and engagement with staff was used to gather insight and inform the build.

Data was gathered from the Cancer Awareness Measure which was carried out across staff groups in 2010.

Staff groups were engaged to understand attitudes towards cancer and earlier presentation and support needs.

The insight allowed the work to adapt to fit the realities and contexts of individual staff roles.

A clear focus on social marketing behavioural theory identified strategies and approaches more likely to work. Lastly, and not least, we considered how to engage staff and opinion leaders to spread the resource to colleagues, families and others.

The Process

Scoping

- Engage key target staff groups

Develop

- Use of behavioural change theory
- Production of Learning Pack:
 - Key information
 - Reinforce key messages and how to disseminate
 - Ideas and strategies to prompt conversation
- Production of resource tools to support staff

Implement (Pilot)

- 'Lunch and Learn' sessions to support use and to build ownership and confidence
- Engage managers and opinion leaders

Evaluate

- Explore use and impact

Spread and sustain

- Spread into system change

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Cancer Network**

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Your Role

Evidence tells us that people delay seeking help for a number of reasons.

Some of it because of a lack of knowledge or awareness about cancer symptoms, some of it because of how they feel about cancer.



Click on a staff group which best fits your own to find out more.

What people often think

Typically people feel that there is relatively little to be gained by seeking help. For many, cancer is seen wholly negatively.

It is not uncommon for people to have low knowledge of cancer symptoms.

What you can do

Reinforce the positive message that 'Early detection saves lives'. This work is not about end of life or death. Early presentation is a very positive message. Help break the silence around cancer by talking about it sensitively and often.

Familiarise yourself with common symptoms and talk to colleagues, families, friends and clients when you have the opportunity. Make sure that there are leaflets and posters available in your workplace.

Click on a staff group which best fits your own to find out more.

What people often think

Many people have experience of cancer, either first hand or with friends and family.

People often place great store by the opinions of trusted staff and colleagues.

People often underestimate the effectiveness of treatments.

What you can do

Recognise that people come with a history which might be positive or negative. Be sensitive but do not let that stop you from talking about cancer.

You are in a position to positively influence people's health. We all have a role, no matter how small!

Reinforce the message that treatment is much more effective when cancers are diagnosed earlier. Outcomes for cancer are improving year on year.

Click on a staff group which best fits your own to find out more.



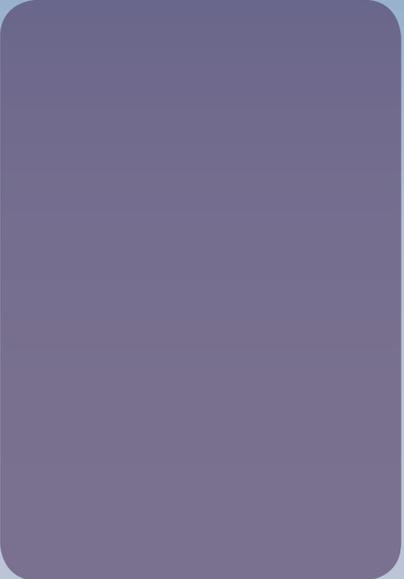
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What people often think

Many people are concerned that they will 'needlessly bother Doctors' with symptoms they feel are not serious

What you can do

Reinforce the message that changes in bodies, no matter how small should be checked out. In the vast majority of cases they are not cancer.



Click on a staff group which best fits your own to find out more.

We spent time with staff, finding out what you thought about cancer and what you felt about supporting people with symptoms to seek help earlier.

What we found out is that some of you have more confidence than others. Some of you have more knowledge and some of you have more time or opportunity to talk to people.

You all agreed that improving earlier presentation was important. You told us that managers have a special role to support you and we have included a specific section in this resource for them.

Taking all of this into account, we will show you different ways to help depending on your role and the situation. The important message is that it fits into your every day work and it is a small but important part of your job.

Think of it as;

- **equipping yourself with information to answer questions,**
- **knowing where to refer people for more information,**
- **spotting opportunities to raise the subject in everyday conversations,**
- **building your confidence to help.**

Click on a staff group which best fits your own to find out more.

With just a minute to talk to patients it might seem daft to try to promote earlier presentation of cancer symptoms. Thankfully, it fits your role like a glove.

Remember, it isn't about diagnosing patients but there is value in being familiar with common symptoms so that you feel confident to suggest people go to their Doctor.

The next pages will describe some common scenarios you might come across and arm you with some tips.



Click on a staff group which best fits your own to find out more.

Things you can do;

- when you are dealing with enquiries, keep an eye out for symptoms – it might be useful to keep our cancer symptom sheets handy,
- familiarise yourself with the early symptoms of cancer so if someone has them, you can make them an urgent appointment to see a GP,
- do what you already do in terms of customer service, be polite, listen to concerns and decide what to do next,
- raise awareness of symptoms by making printed information easily accessible to your patients,
- wear a cancer awareness ribbon and offer them to patients,
- make sure display boards are up to date and hold special events to coincide with awareness months (April=Bowel Cancer, November=Lung Cancer),
- put a poster up in your staff room to raise awareness amongst other staff,
- familiarise yourself with how the bowel cancer screening kits are used and returned so that if a patient asks you how or where to complete them, you can give appropriate information.



**Click on a staff group
which best fits your own
to find out more.**

1 minute scenario:

A patient calls up on the telephone asking for an appointment and you notice they have been coughing a little throughout the call.

They don't mention the cough as a reason for calling. Knowing that a persistent cough for more than 3 weeks is a possible symptom of Lung Cancer, you may ask 'Can I ask how long have you had your cough for?' and make an appointment as soon as possible.

Remember that most symptoms will not be cancer related 'but better safe than sorry'.

In such a short space of time it might be difficult to have a detailed conversation but you can make sure that someone with cancer symptoms gets to see a Doctor as soon as possible.

(Appropriate in person or over the phone)



Click on a staff group which best fits your own to find out more.

Conversation Starter:

Starting conversations about cancer symptoms needn't be difficult if you treat them as part of everyday chat.

Remember it isn't about diagnosis - but it is about raising awareness in a positive way. Keep a stack of leaflets handy, or awareness ribbons so that you can raise awareness simply by handing one over.

You might find it easy to use this as a prompt to say 'We are raising awareness of cancer symptoms and I'm giving all patients a leaflet'. Or 'Did you know it is Lung Cancer Awareness Month, would you like to take a leaflet?' (Every November).

Another starter if you know your client is aged between 60 and 75 years old might be,

'Have you had your Bowel Cancer Screening Kit yet?'

'What did you think of it?'

We know that when staff 'prompt' patients to return their kit they are more likely to do so. Experience suggests that patients don't mind conversations like this.

The key message to remember is 'Earlier presentation saves lives'.

Click on a staff group which best fits your own to find out more.

Bowel Cancer Screening Scenario:

A patient comes into reception and tells you they have received a Bowel Cancer Screening Kit through the post and doesn't know what to do with it.

The amount of support you offer can encourage them to return their kit.

Key messages are;

- this is part of a national NHS screening programme for men and women aged 60 - 75,

- the kit comes with full instructions but you can offer to print some instructions for people if it would help?,
- would they like the telephone number to call for more information?,
- after taking three separate samples, you return the kit in the special envelope by freepost,
- it is designed to spot possible symptoms early
- the earlier Bowel Cancer is detected, the better.

**The number is:
0800 707 60 60**

- the kit is designed to be completed in the privacy of your own home at a time convenient to you,

Want to know more about the NHS Bowel Cancer Screening Programme?

Click on a staff group which best fits your own to find out more.

People who work in social care have told us about the useful time they spend with their clients and how they get to know them well.

That gives you a great set of opportunities to talk to people.

Remember that earlier presentation of cancer symptoms can be seen as a really positive and health improving activity.

If you raise it as part of everyday conversation then it becomes an everyday matter.

Given some straight forward information, you would be in an excellent position to help your clients spot cancer symptoms.

Remember that even when your clients don't have capacity, you can talk to families or carers.

Special guidance is provided around Bowel Cancer Screening for people without mental capacity. We have include that information in later pages.



Click on a staff group which best fits your own to find out more.

Things you can do;

- talking to your clients about any changes in their bodies - our conversation starters might help you to do this,
- keep a symptom sheet handy,
- familiarise yourself with the early symptoms of cancer so if you suspect someone has them and encourage them to make an urgent appointment to see a GP,
- most symptoms will not be because of cancer 'but better safe than sorry',
- raise awareness of symptoms by making printed information easily accessible to your clients,
- make sure display boards are up to date and hold special events to coincide with awareness months,
- familiarise yourself with how the Bowel Cancer screening kits are used and returned so that if a client asks you how or where to complete them, you can give the right information,
- wear a cancer awareness ribbon and offer them to clients,
- put 'Early Presentation of Cancer Symptoms' on the agenda of your team meetings so that you can raise awareness amongst your colleagues - ask for it to be included in training and updates,
- share this resource with your colleagues,
- put a poster up in your staff room to raise awareness amongst other staff.

Click on a staff group which best fits your own to find out more.

Mental Capacity Case Study (From National Screening Programme)

Q: I am a carer, looking after someone who lacks the mental capacity to make their own decisions about screening. They have been invited for screening. How should I deal with their invitation?

A: We recommend a discussion with their GP in the first instance, as he/she has access to their medical records and knowledge of their overall medical health. In general, however some

people's mental capacity varies, in which case the decision about screening should be delayed until the individual is more able to decide for him or herself.

But if the person you care for is unable to make their own decisions about screening, then you, as their carer, should make what is called a 'best interests' decision on their behalf (just as you may be making other decisions about their care and treatment).

You will need to weigh up the benefits of screening, the possible harms, and what you think the person him or herself would have wanted. Paid carers in particular should get advice from family members or friends about the person's views before coming to a decision. Whether you are a paid carer, or an unpaid carer, family member or close friend, this process is the same.

Click on a staff group which best fits your own to find out more.

Conversation Starter:

Starting conversations about cancer symptoms needn't be difficult if you treat them as part of everyday chat.

Remember it isn't about diagnosis - but it is about raising awareness and discussion of possible symptoms in a positive way. Keep a stack of leaflets handy in your office or awareness ribbons so that you can raise awareness simply by putting them in rooms and communal areas.

You might find it easy to use prompts like 'We are raising awareness of cancer symptoms and I'm giving everyone a leaflet'. Or 'Did you know it is Bowel Cancer Awareness Month, would you know what the symptoms are?'

Another starter if you know your client is aged between 60 and 75 years old might be...

'Have you had your Bowel Cancer Screening Kit yet?'

'What did you think of it?'

We know that when staff 'prompt' patients to return their kit they are more likely to do so. Experience suggests that patients don't mind conversations like this.

The key message to remember is 'Earlier presentation saves lives'

Click on a staff group which best fits your own to find out more.

Bowel Cancer Screening Scenario:

Julie is a homecare worker. She has recently been reading the resource produced for staff to help them raise awareness of the signs and symptoms of cancer.

She knows that managers are supportive. She believes that helping clients to be aware of possible symptoms and going for screening is important. Taking the opportunity when she next speaks

to a client she knows is over the age of 60 years, she asks him, 'Mr Smith, a few of our clients have been sent one of the NHS Bowel Cancer Screening Kits. What did you think of it?'

This is an easy conversation starter. Regardless of Mr Smith's reply, it allows Julie to reinforce messages like 'The good thing about them is that you can do them in the privacy of your own home when it suits you.'

In this scenario, Mr Smith says he has had his kit but doesn't know how to actually collect his poo sample. Julie is able to tell him that using a disposable Tupperware carton placed in the loo can help collect it, or tissue paper. 'I can bring you a carton when I next see you Mr Smith'. Next time she sees Mr Smith she gives him a container and the Bowel Cancer Instruction sheet she has printed off from later in this resource.

Click on a staff group which best fits your own to find out more.

Bowel Cancer Symptoms Scenario:

Howard is a staff member in Lancasterland Care Home and has a good relationship with the residents. They talk about everything from the weather to how well people are feeling.

He notices that one of the residents Mrs Henry, is not going to the toilet as often as she used to. He thinks that whilst this could be because of a million different reasons, he knows

that changes in your bowel habits (the number of times you go to the toilet) which last for more than 4-6 weeks can be a symptom to look out for. He asks Mrs Henry 'How are you feeling, you're not as regular as you usually are?' Howard has found that contrary to most people's expectations, it is quite common for his residents to talk about toilet habits and how regular they are. Mrs Henry starts talking about how often she has been going.

Although he doesn't mention Bowel Cancer directly, Howard tells Mrs Henry she should raise it with the Doctor when she sees him. He makes a mental note to himself to follow up with Mrs Henry next week after he records the information in her notes.

Want to know more about the NHS Bowel Cancer Screening Programme?

Click on a staff group which best fits your own to find out more.

People who work in pharmacies have told us that whilst they do not always know their customers, they quickly find out useful information about them.

This might be from people actively seeking out advice or buying products because of symptoms they have. People are already thinking about their health and expect the staff in front of them to be concerned about their wellbeing.

The next pages will describe some common scenarios you might come across.

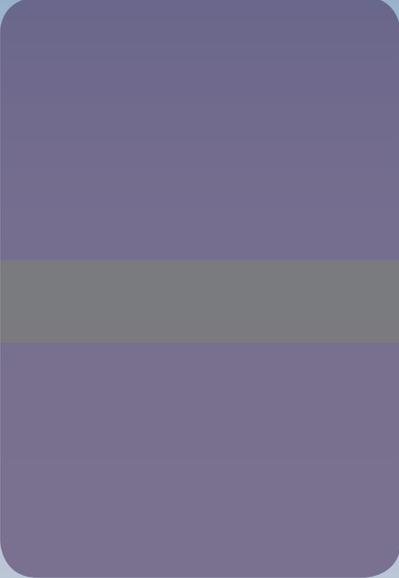


**Click on a staff group
which best fits your own
to find out more.**

“It’s as simple as keeping an eye out for the kind of medication and prescriptions people ask for”.

Things you can do;

- when you are dealing with enquiries, keep an eye out for symptoms – it might be useful to keep our symptom sheets handy,
- watch out for repeat purchasers of products that are for treating lung and bowel cancer symptoms such as cough medicine, constipation relief or diarrhoea tablets,
- if you suspect someone has early symptoms of cancer, advise them to make an appointment with their GP,
- familiarise yourself with how the bowel cancer screening kits are used and returned so that if a customer asks you how or where to complete them, you can give appropriate information,
- wear a cancer awareness ribbon and offer them to clients,
- share this resource with your colleagues,
- put 'Early Presentation of Cancer Symptoms' on the agenda of your team meetings so that you can raise awareness amongst your colleagues – ask for it to be included in training and updates,
- make sure your health promotion display boards are up to date,
- hold special events to coincide with awareness months,
- print off a poster from the 'Resources Section' and put it up in your staff area, to raise awareness amongst other staff.



**Click on a staff group
which best fits your own
to find out more.**

1 minute scenario:

A customer comes to your counter and tells you they have been coughing for more than 3 weeks and that more recently, it has changed into a deeper cough. You know that although a persistent cough is more than likely a symptom of something else, it is a possible symptom of Lung Cancer. You suggest that 'You should really go and get that cough checked out by your GP.'

You know that people are often reluctant to see their GP with coughs, thinking that they are wasting time. You add...

'It is likely to be something easily treated but GP's nowadays want people with symptoms to make appointments to get checked out'

(Appropriate in person.)

In such a short space of time it might be difficult to have a detailed conversation but you can make sure that someone with possible cancer symptoms considers making an appointment with their GP as soon as possible. Usually you will have short contact with customers when they are asking advice about a product, prescription or perhaps they are simply asking about symptoms and advice.

Click on a staff group which best fits your own to find out more.

Bowel Cancer Screening Scenario:

You are working at the counter and a customer comes in asking where he should post their NHS Bowel Cancer Screening Kit envelope.

You recognise that they are talking about the NHS Bowel Cancer Screening kit and advise the customer the envelope is specially sealed and addressed so that it can be safely posted in any post box free of charge.

Knowing that people can often act as a 'nudge' to friends and family members to complete the test, just to check out you ask,

“How easy did you find it to complete”.

You are interested to find out if they collected two samples, from three different trips to the toilet.

You could also say,

“It wasn't that bad, was it? I hope you tell all of your friends with a Bowel Cancer Screening Kit how easy it is and get them to return theirs”.

Want to know more about the NHS Bowel Cancer Screening Programme?

Click on a staff group which best fits your own to find out more.

People who work as Health Trainers or other lifestyle advisers have told us about the useful time they spend with their clients and how they get to know them well.

Given some information, you would be in an excellent position to help your clients spot cancer symptoms.

For some of you, if your role allows it, you might even be able to support people by going to services with them.

Bringing a trusted friend increases the likelihood of people seeking help and reassures them through their journey.

As Health Trainers, you have the skills and the opportunity to talk to people about cancer symptoms as part of your work. Perhaps you are going with someone to see a GP or you might be staffing a stall in the community or talking to a client about health concerns and behaviour change.

The next pages will describe some common scenarios you might come across and give you some tips.



Click on a staff group which best fits your own to find out more.

“I am able to include symptom discussions and information about the various cancer screening programmes in my individual interviews now”.

You can help customers to spot symptoms;

- talk to your clients about any changes in their bodies – our conversation starters might help you to do this,
- keep a symptom sheet handy,
- support and encourage your clients to make an appointment with a GP if you think they might have symptoms,
- if you disseminate health information, include some leaflets and resources about cancer symptoms,
- familiarise yourself with the early symptoms of cancer so if you suspect someone has them, advise them to make an appointment with their GP,
- change your interview notes / prompts so that you include a question about cancer symptoms and awareness,
- hold events to coincide with awareness months,
- put a poster up in your staff room to raise awareness amongst other staff,
- familiarise yourself with how the bowel cancer screening kits are used and returned,
- wear a cancer awareness ribbon and offer them to clients,
- share this resource with your colleagues,
- put 'Early Presentation of Cancer Symptoms' on the agenda of your team meetings so that you can raise awareness amongst your colleagues – ask for it to be included in training and updates.

Click on a staff group which best fits your own to find out more.

Health Trainer Appointments with Clients

You will already speak to your clients and community members about a range of health information and health protecting information.

You don't have to be an expert but knowing some of the key signs and symptoms is a great start.

The most important thing you could do though is to include 'cancer symptoms' in your conversations so that it is asked at every interview and meeting with people.

You might find it helpful to read some of the other scenarios included within the other job roles of this resource.

This resource should simply reinforce your own knowledge and point you in the direction for more help and support.

Click on a staff group which best fits your own to find out more.

1 of 2

We know from our conversations with staff they want explicit permission from their managers to get involved in this important work.

All of the staff we spoke to said they thought their manager would be very supportive of this work and their involvement in it. Helping reduce costs, both in health and in resource makes great sense for every organisation.



Click on a staff group which best fits your own to find out more.

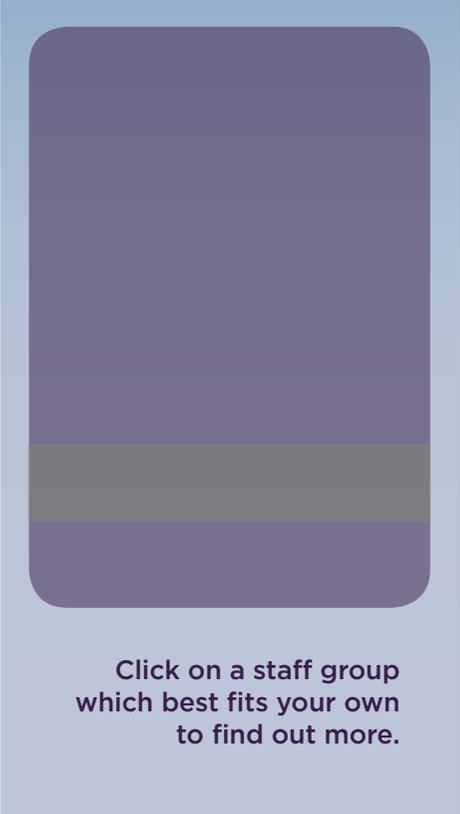
“Of course I want staff to feel like they have permission to carry out this work. If it is good for our clients then it is good for the organisation.”

If supporting staff to help earlier presentation of cancer symptoms is part of their every day role then it doesn't take any additional time up.

It helps increase customer care and satisfaction and it can reduce complications in the future. To make this initiative a success we need you to visibly support your staff. There are a number of ways you can be proactive.

You can do this by;

- using the sample email/ memo included in the Resource Section to send out to your staff,
- distributing this resource to staff,
- adding this resource pack to your team meeting agenda,
- printing out and put up the poster included in the 'Resource Section' on a staff notice board,
- adding use of this resource to training and development plans
- releasing some members of staff for training and workshops.



Click on a staff group which best fits your own to find out more.

Our message

‘Early presentation saves lives’ is important for staff and clients.

Treatment is often easier if help is sought early. We don't expect you to know every detail about every cancer but knowing the key symptoms of common cancers can make such a huge difference.

This resource describes specific symptoms for Bowel Cancer and Lung Cancers but there are several other common cancers that you might want to find out more about.

Changes in your body are the best indicator of something not being right. The common feature of all possible symptoms is whether they feel 'normal' compared to what you are used to.

Some of the symptoms of common cancers include;

- a persistent cough which lasts longer than 3 weeks,
- a change in bowel movements which lasts longer than 4-6 weeks,
- any unusual lumps,
- unexplained weight loss
- changes to moles or freckles,
- a white or red patch in the mouth which doesn't heal within three weeks.



Links to further information are included in the Resource Section.

1 of 6

Bowel Cancer is a general term that is used to describe cancer that most often begins in the large bowel.

It can sometimes be referred to as colon cancer or rectal cancer. The colon and rectum belong to our body's digestive system.

Symptoms of Bowel Cancer include blood in your stools (faeces or poo), an unexplained change in your bowel habits, such as prolonged diarrhoea or constipation, stomach pains and unexplained weight loss. Most of these symptoms can be caused by other diseases. These include piles (haemorrhoids), infections or inflammatory bowel disease. It is the combination of symptoms and age that is important and will alert your doctor to the possibility of Bowel Cancer

In England, Bowel Cancer is the third most common type of cancer, with an estimated 30,800 new cases diagnosed each year.

It is the second most common cancer in women after breast cancer and the third most common cancer in men after prostate and Lung Cancer.

Want to know more about the NHS Bowel Cancer Screening Programme?



Watch a short video from Cancer Research UK to find out more about the signs and symptoms of bowel cancer, and why spotting bowel cancer early is important.

Who is at risk?

Slightly more men than women are diagnosed with Bowel Cancer. A strong family history of Bowel Cancer can increase your own risk as does having an existing bowel condition such as Crohn's Disease.

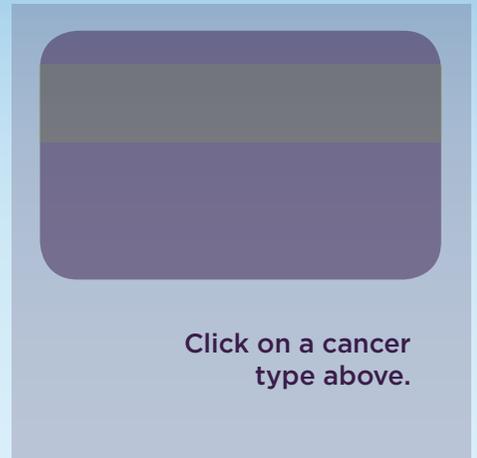
Other factors include diabetes (although we don't know why) and being obese. A lifestyle which includes lack of exercise, poor diet and high alcohol consumption may increase your risk of Bowel Cancer.

Although it can be diagnosed in people of any age, 80% of people who are diagnosed are aged over 60 years old and risk increases with age.

The great message about Bowel Cancer is that caught early enough, it has one of the best survival and treatment rates.

Because of where the cancer is, people sometimes have a particular embarrassment talking about faeces (poo) or bottoms and symptoms. Sometimes people find it difficult to choose the right language or feel it is not something to talk about. It's important not to reinforce this and that we try to reduce the embarrassment.

Choose words you think suit the situation you are in. Often you will find that given the right prompts, people are very happy to be able to discuss their concerns.



Watch a short video from Cancer Research UK to find out more about the signs and symptoms of bowel cancer, and why spotting bowel cancer early is important.

Symptoms

The initial symptoms of Bowel Cancer include;

- blood in your poo and/or bleeding from your bum,
- a change to your normal bowel habits that persists for more than six weeks, such as diarrhoea, constipation, or passing stools more frequently than usual,
- abdominal pain, and unexplained weight loss.

Anyone suspect of having Bowel Cancer will be referred by their GP into services within 2 weeks to your local hospital for some additional tests.

These tests might include;

- Blood tests
- X-rays
- Scans
- Ultrasound
- Barium enema
- Colonoscopy



Click on a cancer type above.

Watch a short video from Cancer Research UK to find out more about the signs and symptoms of bowel cancer, and why spotting bowel cancer early is important.

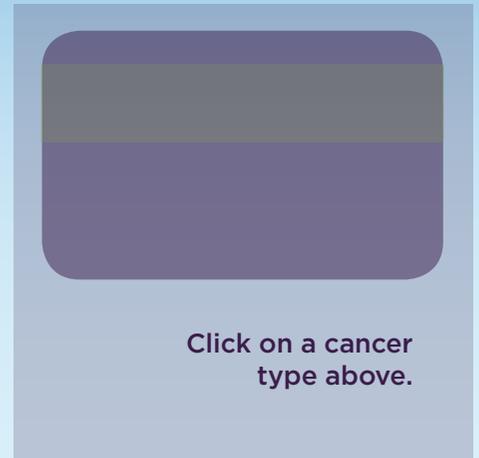
What is Bowel Cancer Screening?

In 2006, the NHS launched a screening programme for Bowel Cancer. It was the first national screening programme for men and women.

It is recommended that all people between 60 – 75 years old are screened every two years. Letters are sent out from GP lists to people at home and it is not uncommon for people living together to receive their kits at different times.

A letter is sent out first, explaining all about the test and what to expect. About one week later the kit will arrive. A kit is sent to every person aged 60 – 75 and it is designed to be completed in the privacy of your own home.

Screening is carried out by taking a small sample of your stool (faeces or poo) and then posting it in a special envelope for testing for the presence of blood. The kit itself can be a little 'fiddly' because of having to take two small samples on three separate visits to the toilet and placing them on the kit.



Watch a short video from Cancer Research UK to find out more about the signs and symptoms of bowel cancer, and why spotting bowel cancer early is important.

If you are older or younger than this age range, you can still request a screening kit. People outside of this age range who might be concerned can request a test simply by calling: 0800 707 60 60 (free)

Although the kit comes with instructions, you may find yourself having to explain how to complete the test to clients or patients. You can help greatly by familiarising yourself with this by reading the resources later on.

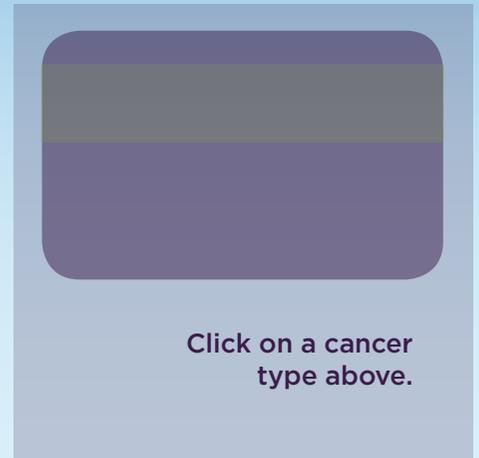
As strange as it sounds, you can also advise on how to collect the poo. The best ways seem to be using a plastic container to collect, or tissue piled in the toilet.

Because Bowel Cancer Screening aims to detect bowel cancer at an early stage, it can often identify people who have no symptoms.

Bowel Cancer Screening can also detect polyps. These are not cancers, but may develop into cancers over time. They can easily be removed, reducing the risk of bowel cancer developing.

After it is returned through the post using the special freepost envelope, the completed Screening kit is sent to a laboratory and results are returned by post to people's homes.

The time for results to come back is usually fast; taking around 2 weeks to return. GPs are notified in writing of all results.



Watch a short video from Cancer Research UK to find out more about the signs and symptoms of bowel cancer, and why spotting bowel cancer early is important.

Key messages are;

- the Screening kit can be completed in the privacy and safety of your own home,
- at a time that is convenient,
- it is not an invasive test,
- it can identify bowel cancer at an early stage and greatly increase chances of survival,
- the kits are safe (and free) to post back in their special envelope.



Click on a cancer type above.

Watch a short video from Cancer Research UK to find out more about the signs and symptoms of bowel cancer, and why spotting bowel cancer early is important.

Lung Cancer is one of the most common and serious types of cancer. It is thought of as being more serious because diagnosis often is not made until it is more advanced. That is why earlier diagnosis is so important.

Lung Cancer is the second most common cancer (after skin cancer) in England and Wales, with an estimated 31,000 new cases being diagnosed every year.

It is the most common cause of cancer related death in both men and women

Symptoms are quite varied and depend on where the cancer is located, where it has spread, and how big the tumour is. Lung Cancer symptoms may take years before appearing, usually after the disease is in an advanced stage.

Symptoms

The most common symptoms of Lung Cancer include;

- a continuing cough (usually for 3 weeks or more)
- a chest infection that does not get better
- increasing breathlessness
- a dull ache, or a sharp pain, when you cough or take a deep breath
- loss of appetite and loss of weight
- difficulty swallowing
- excessive tiredness and lethargy.



Watch a short video from Cancer Research UK to find out more about the signs and symptoms of lung cancer, and why spotting lung cancer early is important.

Who is at risk?

Lung Cancer is primarily a disease that affects older people. Cases are rare in people who are under 40 years of age, but the rates of Lung Cancer rise sharply with age. The most common age range that Lung Cancer is diagnosed is between 70-74 years of age.

Smoking is the single biggest risk factor for Lung Cancer, accounting for an estimated 85-90% of cases. The more you smoke, the more likely you are to get Lung Cancer. But the length of time you have been a smoker is most important. However Lung Cancer can occur in people who are non smokers.

Lung Cancer does not usually cause any noticeable symptoms until it has spread through much of the lungs and/or into other parts of the body.

Survival rates can vary widely depending on how far the cancer has spread at the time of the diagnosis. Often people do not believe their symptoms are serious and can delay seeking help because they view a cough or other symptoms as 'nothing to bother a GP about'. It is also common for people to believe that as smokers, others will hold negative views of them.

Both of these are important myths to dispel and you should encourage people to seek help as soon as possible.



Watch a short video from Cancer Research UK to find out more about the signs and symptoms of lung cancer, and why spotting lung cancer early is important.

Diagnosis and Treatment

If Lung Cancer is suspected then the patient will be referred for a chest x-ray by their GP.

If the x-ray shows something that might suggest Lung Cancer then the GP will arrange an urgent referral to a chest specialist. Usually you should see the specialist within 2 weeks of this referral being made.

Lung Cancer is usually treated using a combination of chemotherapy, radiotherapy, and surgery.

Remember the most common symptom is;

- a continuing cough,
- or change in a long-standing cough,
- usually for 3 weeks or more.



Click on a cancer type above.

Watch a short video from Cancer Research UK to find out more about the signs and symptoms of lung cancer, and why spotting lung cancer early is important.

“We need to encourage staff and help them to understand that then can’t really do any wrong discussing cancer but they could have a big impact by doing so”

Manager

“Staff should be made aware that is their role no matter what their job is, to talk about fears and to raise awareness that early diagnosis is better than late. We would rather we tested lots of people who don’t have cancer, rather than miss the one that does. Patients should be able to talk to anyone about their fears”

GP

“I have always felt it important that people are made aware of the signs / symptoms of cancer, as this could make a difference between a life and death situation. My mother died from Bowel Cancer, I had been very worried about her as I had been made aware that she had been passing blood in her faeces, my mother was a worrier and she did not like any of the family talking about cancer in her presence, as you can imagine this made it extremely difficult for me, I had to try to get her to GP without making her aware of my concerns.”

Staff Member



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“NHS North Lancashire wholeheartedly supports the project in trying to improve staff awareness of cancer. NHS and Social Care staff all have a vital role to play in recognising the possible warning signs of the disease.”

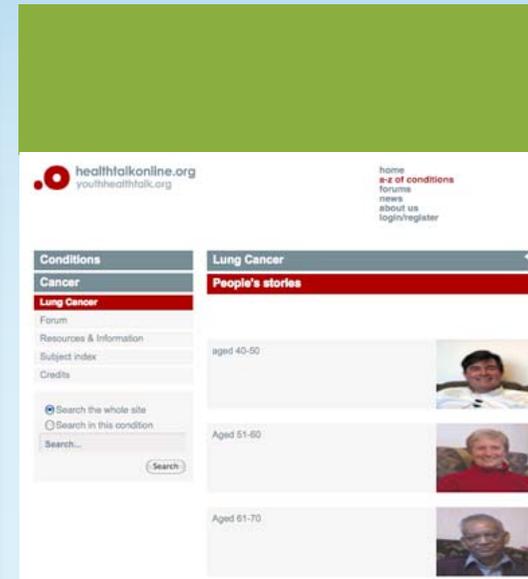
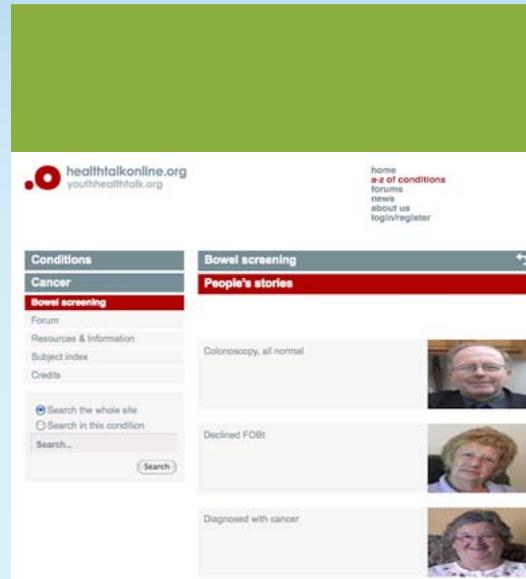
Janet Soo-Chung, Chief Executive at NHS Lancashire

“When you first approached me with this project and asked me about helping patients be more aware of the signs and symptoms of cancer I was a bit unsure what my role could be. I now see the importance of just little things, like talking to colleagues, being alert for opportunities to talk to patients or even just making sure we have leaflets available. That such little things can save lives makes it so useful and so easy for us to do.”

Receptionist in GP Surgery



Clicking on the each cancer type opposite will take you to the Health Talk website where you can hear about people's real experiences of



Training

When we spoke to staff we were thrilled that most people were very enthusiastic about supporting clients and patients.

Some of you lacked confidence about how to raise the subject and what information to give. We would always advise people to do what they feel right and appropriate for each situation.

Being aware of the importance of earlier presentation, screening information and key symptoms isn't just something clinical staff should do. It should be an everyday part of all of our jobs. It can make such a difference.

Simple things like talking about cancer with colleagues, families and friends can help us rehearse information and ways to raise the subject. A variety of training is planned or already provided for staff and this can improve their skills and knowledge.

Training for staff is provided across the region and you should find out more from the links provided.

The Sage and Thyme training has been specially commissioned to help people tackle subjects they might find tricky. It is available for all staff and requires no prior learning or knowledge.

For more information, contact Lancashire and South Cumbria Cancer Network on (01772) 647040

“All I needed was a little confidence that what I was saying was the right information”

Staff Member

Things you can do;

- talking with your Manager about training opportunities - these can be some of the Sage and Thyme training or other health and wellbeing training,
- asking for Health Improvement/Health Promotion specialists to come to your team meetings and give a short talk. Your local Cancer Network can advise,
- sharing this resource with other colleagues,
- taking some time to read leaflets, web sites and up to date information - much of it is very easy to understand.

Links are included in the Resources Section.



Good customer care helps most situations.

As committed staff members, you already know the importance of treating people with respect and dignity.

This work fits right in there. Giving every client or patient the space to describe concerns they might have is an important first step in supporting earlier presentation of cancer. It all fits into a positive, health promoting approach.

People are not always able to tell you about their concerns (even if they recognise them) and so you may have to pick up on cues and little bits of information.

Listening to what is being said and body language can be important. In addition, if people feel more at ease when they seek help, they are more likely to listen and take advantage of your support.

People who suspect they have symptoms often seek reassurance. A warm and open manner will help.

Evidence suggests for example, that if an abnormal result is found, people often require support and encouragement to undergo treatment or further diagnosis.

“You would be surprised what you can do with a smile. Listening to patients sometimes feels like a luxury but it is one of the most important things we can do to help.”

Staff Member

You told us you would like a little information about reducing the risk of cancer and the NHS Bowel Cancer Screening Programme.

Screening for cancers is an important way of preventing and detecting cancers early.

It is a myth to believe that getting cancer is simply down to bad luck or genetic factors. Experts believe that up to half of cases can be prevented through lifestyle changes.

It doesn't stop your chances completely but it can greatly reduce your risk.

The four biggest lifestyle changes you can make are: not smoking; keeping active; moderating how much alcohol you drink; and eating five daily portions of fruit and vegetables.

How can I reduce my risk of developing Bowel Cancer?

- Get to know your normal bowel habits so that you can recognise any changes.

- Eat a healthy diet, including at least five portions of fruit and vegetables a day, wholegrain foods, fish, less saturated fat (found in cakes and pastries, for example) and no more than 80g a day of red and processed meat, such as bacon and ham.
- Do not drink more than the recommended daily alcohol limits of 3-4 units for men and 2-3 units for women.
- Do regular exercise and try to keep a healthy weight.

- Give up smoking. Help and support are available free on the NHS.

How can I reduce my risk of developing Lung Cancer?

- Most lung cancers are caused by smoking. If you stop smoking, you'll reduce your risk of developing Lung Cancer. This is true no matter how old you are when you stop.

Resources

You told us that sometimes it can help to have a 'prompt' or a resource to share with each other or with clients and patients.

We have produced a variety of resources that can be printed. Take some time to explore them and share them with colleagues.

**Quick Read
Symptom Sheets**

**Model Agenda and
Discussion Point
for Team Meeting**

Quiz Sheets

**Managers
Memo/email**

**Staff Room Poster
(Is this your job,
Yes No?)**

**Bowel Cancer
Screening
Instructions**



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Bowel Cancer

Useful information about bowel cancer and bowel cancer screening can be found at the following locations:

Lung Cancer

Useful information about lung cancer can be found at the following locations:

Regional

Local

Information about services across North and Central Lancashire:

Customer Care

A resource highlighting the essentials of Patient Care:

Training

National Communications Skills Training specifically for staff wanting to develop their skills around cancer

