

EARLY DIAGNOSIS AND SCREENING



CANCER RESEARCH UK

Early diagnosis saves lives

Spotting cancer early maximises your chances of successful treatment. That's why we're doing everything we can to ensure that more people are diagnosed earlier.

ABOUT EARLY DIAGNOSIS

Cancer survival rates have doubled over the last 40 years and that's partly because doctors have become much better at spotting the disease early. Most deaths from cancer are caused when it spreads around the body. So spotting cancer early – before it's had time to spread – is a real opportunity to give thousands of people more tomorrows.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP SPOT CANCER EARLY?

There are over 200 different types of cancer, and their symptoms can differ from person to person. So it's a good idea to get to know your body and what's normal for you. If you notice any unusual or persistent changes, get them checked out with your doctor. It may well not be cancer – but if it is, an early diagnosis could make a huge difference.

WHAT ABOUT SCREENING?

Screening programmes are designed to save lives by detecting cancer at an early stage, before people notice any symptoms or begin to feel unwell. Screening can sometimes prevent cancer from developing in the first place. There are three national screening programmes in the UK: for breast, bowel and cervical cancers.

Screening programmes are only available for types of cancer where there is an effective test for the disease – not all tests are suitable. For example, high levels of prostate-specific antigen (PSA) in the blood can be a sign of prostate cancer. But a raised PSA level does not always indicate cancer, and not all men with the disease have high levels – making it unreliable as a screening test.

FACTS AND FIGURES



Diagnosing cancer early is a challenge for GPs, who individually see fewer than eight new cases each year.



More than nine out of 10 patients with bowel cancer can be successfully treated if diagnosed at the earliest stage.



Last year, we spent over £4 million looking for better ways to spot cancer earlier.



Thousands of lung cancer deaths could be avoided by earlier diagnosis.



Together, the cancer screening programmes save thousands of lives each year in the UK.

Have you got questions about cancer?

Visit cruk.org/about-cancer or call our specialist cancer nurses on 0808 800 4040



OUR SCIENCE CHANGES LIVES

We helped to develop, test and improve the screening techniques for the breast, cervical and bowel cancer national screening programmes.

SANDY FROM PERTH KNOWS THE IMPORTANCE OF EARLY DIAGNOSIS

“ My wife had to persuade me to do the bowel screening test but I'm so glad she did. I never thought I could have bowel cancer, I felt fine! My early diagnosis was my second chance. It meant I was there at my daughter's wedding and that I'll be able to watch my beautiful grandchildren grow up. I'm so lucky. ”

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Registered charity in England and Wales (1089464), Scotland (SC041666) and the Isle of Man (1103).

For information on early diagnosis and screening, go to cruk.org



PROFESSOR IAN JACOBS IN MANCHESTER TELLS US HIS STORY

// I have been researching ovarian cancer for almost 30 years. During that time, there has been exciting progress in understanding the genetic and lifestyle factors that can increase a woman's risk, and in methods for early detection and screening. Ovarian cancer kills thousands of women in the UK each year, often because it's diagnosed at an advanced stage. My aim is to help save lives by developing a screening programme - using blood tests and ultrasound - that will help us to catch it early, when treatment is more likely to be successful.



We receive no government funding for our research

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

We want all cancer patients to be diagnosed at an early stage, maximising their chance of making a full recovery.

AWARENESS

We're helping people spot the early signs of cancer and we're giving them the confidence to chat to their GP about any persistent symptoms.

SUPPORT

We're working with GPs to ensure that the right people are referred for further tests as quickly as possible - to save lives by reducing delays.

OVERCOMING BARRIERS

We're looking at where an early diagnosis can make the biggest impact and what needs to be done to speed it up.

INNOVATION

We're developing tests to detect the earliest signs of cancer - potentially giving patients decades of life back, not just months or years.

OUR PROGRESS IS YOUR PROGRESS

Our early diagnosis research is helping save lives, but there's still a lot to do.

Oxford: Professor Ian Tomlinson is looking for the genes that increase bowel cancer risk. His research could give people at high risk the chance to receive tailored screening and prevention advice.



Bristol: Dr Richard Martin is trying to answer a crucial question in prostate cancer research - does widespread PSA screening really save lives? The results of his work could have huge implications for the way men in the UK are screened and diagnosed with the disease.

Guildford: Professor Kenneth Young is investigating new digital X-ray technology, which could improve breast cancer detection and save even more lives.



London: Professor Peter Sasieni is finding ways to make the cervical cancer screening programme even more effective. And Dr Laura Woods is exploring the complex issue of breast cancer survival - specifically whether lower screening uptake can explain the poorer survival rates seen in women from lower-income households. Professor Jane Wardle's goal is to identify and tackle the barriers that make people less likely to take up cancer screening invitations.



Cambridge: Professor Bruce Ponder wants to solve the problem of late diagnosis for lung cancer by finding those most at risk of the disease. In the future, it could be possible to monitor these people for signs of lung cancer to ensure that it is spotted at an early stage.



Find out more: download other research leaflets in this series at cruk.org/researchleaflets