



# Spotting cancer early saves lives

## Do you want to know about spotting the symptoms of cancer?

In this leaflet, you'll find out:

- When to talk to your doctor
- Tips for getting the most out of your appointment
- 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, tell your doctor. In most cases it won't be cancer – but if it is, finding it at an early stage can make a real difference.

## Take charge

You know your body best, so don't ignore it if something doesn't look or feel quite right, or won't go away.

The symptoms listed here are more likely to be caused by something other than cancer. But if you do notice any of these, or something else unusual even if it's not on the list – talk to your doctor.

## General symptoms

- Very heavy night sweats or fever
- Unexplained bleeding or bruising
- Feeling more tired than usual
- An unexplained pain or ache
- Unexplained weight loss
- Appetite loss
- An unusual lump or swelling anywhere on your body

## skin

- A new mole or changes to a mole
- A sore that won't heal
- Yellowing of the skin and eyes (jaundice)



## Mouth and throat

- Difficulty swallowing
- Croaky voice or hoarseness that won't go away
- Mouth or tongue ulcer that lasts longer than 3 weeks



## Breast or chest

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



## Lungs

- Breathlessness
- Persistent cough or coughing up blood



## Tummy

- Long-lasting heartburn or indigestion
- Persistent bloating or tummy pain



## Going to the toilet and genitals

- A change in bowel habit, such as constipation, looser poo, or pooing more often
- Blood in your poo or pee
- Unexplained vaginal bleeding including after sex, between periods or after the menopause
- Problems peeing

Listen to  
your body



## Talk to your doctor

Whether it's via phone, video or face-to-face, your doctor wants to hear about any unusual changes you're experiencing.

If you're worried about talking to a doctor, here are some tips:

### Be prepared.

Think about how to describe any changes and how long you've had them for. Writing down what you want to say and ask can help.

### Be honest.

Tell the doctor about anything unusual, even if it doesn't seem important or you think it might be embarrassing. Your doctor is a professional and is used to helping with lots of different types of symptoms.

### Be thorough.

Mention all your symptoms and don't put it down to 'just getting older', or assume it's part of another health condition.

### Stick with it.

Don't worry you might be wasting your doctor's time. Even if you're struggling to get an appointment, or you've been to see them already, they want to know if something's still not quite right.



## Cancer screening

Screening is for people without symptoms. It can save lives by finding cancer at an early stage – it can also prevent cancer.

There are three national cancer screening programmes in the UK:

**breast, bowel and cervical.**

A **new lung cancer screening** programme is slowly being introduced for people at high risk of lung cancer.

To be invited for screening, you need to be registered with your doctor.

It's important to read the information provided with your invitation, so you can decide if you'd like to take part or not.

People are invited for screening tests at different ages. Visit [cruk.org/screening](https://cruk.org/screening) to read more, including for more information if you are trans or non-binary.

Even if you've been screened recently 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?

Here's some good news: survival is on the up. And thanks to research, treatments are now kinder and more effective than ever. But most importantly, when cancer's spotted at an early stage, treatment is more likely to be successful.



### How to find out more:

#### Visit our website

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

#### Give us a call

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](mailto: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**.

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