



### Common concerns

#### **I don't feel or look ill, so it must be nothing.**

The most ordinary thing could be a sign of cancer. It's best to see your doctor if you notice any warning signs or symptoms described in this leaflet.

#### **I've seen the doctor already but my symptoms haven't gone away.**

If your symptoms haven't gone away, have changed or have got worse, your doctor will want to know. It is important to go back and see your doctor again. Be stubborn if your symptom is stubborn.

#### **I'm worried about what the doctor might find.**

Unless you go and get yourself checked out you won't know if anything serious is the matter. You have nothing to lose by going to the doctor, but you could have everything to gain. If it is something serious, finding it early and getting treatment started can make a real difference.

### **Taking part in cancer screening could save your life.**

Screening can pick up signs of cancer at an early stage before symptoms have a chance to develop. Early detection means that treatments are often simpler and have a higher chance of success. It is important to be registered with a GP to take part in screening.

#### **Breast cancer screening (mammography)**

Breast screening can help find cancers when they are too small to see or feel. All women over 50 are eligible for breast screening. In England, the programme is being extended to include women aged 47 to 73. If you are over 70 (over 64 in Northern Ireland) and would like to be screened, you will need to speak to your doctor or breast screening unit to arrange an appointment.

#### **Cervical screening (the smear test)**

Cervical screening aims to find early changes in the cervix that could develop into cancer. Treating early changes can prevent cervical cancer from developing. Women are invited every three to five years from their early twenties to their early sixties.

#### **Bowel cancer screening**

Bowel screening is used to check for early signs of cancer and looks for hidden traces of blood in your stools. Older men and women who are eligible for screening will receive an invitation letter and a screening kit so that they can do the test at home. Samples are sent to the lab for testing.

### Further information

For more about the signs and symptoms of cancer visit [www.spotcancerearly.com](http://www.spotcancerearly.com)

For more about cancer visit our patient information website [www.cancerhelp.org.uk](http://www.cancerhelp.org.uk)

If you want to talk in confidence about cancer, call our information nurses on freephone **0808 800 4040**.

Our health messages are based on scientific evidence. Find out more at [www.cancerresearchuk.org/health](http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/health)

All our leaflets are thoroughly researched and based on the most up-to-date scientific evidence. They are reviewed externally by independent experts and updated regularly. You can order our full range of leaflets free online at [www.cancerresearchuk.org/leaflets](http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/leaflets)

### About Cancer Research UK

Cancer Research UK is the world's leading charity dedicated to research into the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of cancer. If you would like to support our work, please call **020 7121 6699** or visit our website [www.cancerresearchuk.org](http://www.cancerresearchuk.org)

*Together we will beat cancer*

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# Spotting the signs of cancer

## For women



Thousands of people beat cancer every year.

When cancer is diagnosed at an early stage, treatment is often simpler and more likely to be successful. So finding cancer early can make a real difference.

More than one in three women in the UK will develop cancer at some point in their lives. The disease mainly affects older people, with nearly nine out of 10 cases in people over 50 years old.

In this leaflet you can find out:

- the key signs and symptoms women should look out for
- why it is important to get these symptoms checked out by a doctor
- screening for cancer.

### Why is spotting cancer early so important?

Thousands of cancer deaths could be prevented each year if more cancers were diagnosed at an early stage. When cancer is picked up early, the chances of surviving it are greater.

Today, more people than ever are surviving cancer. This is because of better treatments and early detection. Almost two out of three women with breast cancer now survive the disease beyond 20 years. And when bowel cancer is caught early more than nine in 10 people can be treated successfully.

So if you notice any unusual or persistent changes in your body, go and see your doctor.

You have nothing to lose by going to the doctor, but you could have everything to gain. If it is something serious, finding it early and getting treatment started can make a real difference. Going to the doctor now could change the outcome later.



### What should you look out for?

- Changes in the size, shape or feel of your breasts
- Any puckering, dimpling or redness of the skin on your breasts
- Changes in the position of the nipple, a rash or nipple discharge
- A mouth or tongue ulcer that lasts longer than three weeks
- A cough or croaky voice that lasts longer than three weeks
- Persistent difficulty swallowing or indigestion
- A change to more frequent bowel motions that lasts longer than six weeks
- Blood in your stools
- Problems passing urine
- Blood in your urine
- Bleeding from the vagina after the menopause or between periods
- A change in the size, shape or colour of a mole
- An unexplained pain or ache that lasts longer than four weeks
- An unusual lump or swelling anywhere on your body
- Unexplained weight loss or heavy night sweats
- A sore that won't heal after several weeks

Do any of these apply to you? If so, why not go and see your GP and take this leaflet with you.

### Cancer signs and symptoms

There are more than 200 different types of cancer, which can cause many different symptoms. Experts agree that the symptoms mentioned in this leaflet are the most important ones to look out for and act on.

As a general rule, it's a good idea to know what's normal for you and to listen to your body. This will make it easier for you to spot any new changes that could be signs of cancer. If you notice any unusual or persistent changes, it's worth getting checked out.

