Common concerns

I’m worried about what the doctor might find
Many people feel worried about finding out that they are unwell. But if there is something wrong, finding it at an early stage and getting treatment started quickly can mean treatment will be easier and the chances of a successful outcome better.

I don’t feel or look ill, so it can’t be anything serious
When cancers are small they may not make you feel or look unwell. It is important to see your doctor if you notice any persistent or unusual changes, even if they seem insignificant at the time.

I’ve already seen the doctor about my symptoms and I don’t want to bother him/her again
If your symptoms haven’t gone away, have changed or have got worse, your doctor will want to know, so it’s worth making a new appointment. Be stubborn if your symptom is stubborn.

Cancer screening could save your life
Cancer screening tests can help detect the disease at an early stage before symptoms have a chance to develop, and some can prevent cancer too. You need to be registered with a GP to be invited for cancer screening.

Bowel cancer screening
Bowel screening with the faecal occult blood test (FOBT) looks for hidden traces of blood in your stools. These tiny amounts of blood can be a sign of bowel cancer, or changes in the bowel that could develop into cancer. Catching these changes early can improve the chances of successful treatment.
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. In England a new bowel screening test called flexi-scope will be introduced in the next few years. This test uses a tiny camera on the end of a flexible tube to look for growths in the bowel. This test can help prevent bowel cancer and detect the disease early.

Prostate cancer
There is currently no national screening programme for prostate cancer. This is because there isn’t a good test to help doctors decide who might need further investigation. Men are able to request a Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA) test from their doctor. This test is not all that reliable, so it is not right for all men. It can lead to unnecessary investigations and treatment.

If you think you would like to have the PSA test speak to your doctor who can help you decide whether the test is right for you.

Further information
For more about the signs and symptoms of cancer visit spotcancerearly.com
For more about cancer visit our patient information website cruk.org/cancer-help
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 cruk.org/health
All our leaflets are thoroughly researched and based on the most up-to-date scientific evidence. They are reviewed by independent experts and updated regularly. You can order our full range of leaflets free online at cruk.org/leaflets

About Cancer Research UK
CRUK pioneers life-saving research to bring forward the day when all cancers are cured. From our volunteers and supporters to our scientists, doctors and nurses, we’re all here to save more lives and prevent, control and cure all cancers. If you would like to support our work, please call 0300 123 1861 or visit our website cruk.org
Spotting cancer early saved my life. Now I’m back to my old self.

Thousands of people beat cancer every year. When cancer is diagnosed at an early stage, treatment is more likely to be successful. So finding cancer early can make a real difference.

More than one in three men in the UK will develop cancer at some point in their lives. The disease is mainly diagnosed in older people, with nearly nine out of 10 cases in people aged 50 and over.

In this leaflet you can find out about:
- the key signs and symptoms men should look out for
- why it is important to get these symptoms checked out by a doctor
- screening tests to prevent cancer and detect it early.

Why is spotting cancer early so important?
Cancer survival rates in the UK have doubled in the last 40 years. This is mainly because of better treatments, screening and earlier diagnosis. When bowel cancer is caught at the earliest stage, more than nine in 10 people can be treated successfully.

But thousands more cancer deaths could be prevented each year if we improved early diagnosis and treatment even further.

So if you notice any unusual or persistent changes in your body, go and see your doctor. You have nothing to lose, but you could have everything to gain. If it is something serious, finding it at an early stage and getting treatment started promptly offers a better chance of beating the disease.

Cancer signs and symptoms
There are more than 200 different types of cancer, which can cause many different symptoms. Experts agree that the symptoms in this leaflet are some of the most important ones to look out for and act on. It’s also a good idea to get to know your body and what’s normal for you. This will make it easier for you to spot any unusual or persistent changes that should be checked out by a doctor.

What should you look out for?
- 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 for three weeks or more
- Blood in your stools
- Problems passing urine
- Blood in your urine
- 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, they are most likely to be caused by something much less serious than cancer, but it is worth getting checked out by your doctor. You could take this leaflet with you to explain to your doctor why you’re there.

CLIVE BARLEY
Bowel cancer survivor
I went to see my GP after I noticed some blood in my stools. My cancer was caught in the very early stages and thanks to excellent treatment my experience has been a very positive one.

I now have my life back again and have been able to see two more grandchildren born and see my youngest daughter graduate and get married. Since completing treatment I also took up running and have gone on to complete several marathons and half marathons.
Cancer screening could save your life
Cancer screening tests can help detect the disease at an early stage before symptoms have a chance to develop, and some can prevent cancer too. You need to be registered with a GP to be invited for cancer screening.

Breast cancer screening (mammography)
Mammography can help detect breast cancers at a very early stage when they are too small to see or feel. In the UK, all women over 50 are eligible for breast screening and receive invitations up to the age of 70. If you are over 70 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 can help prevent cervical cancer by detecting and treating early changes in the cervix before they can develop into cervical cancer. As well as preventing cervical cancer, screening can also detect cancers at an early stage when treatment is more likely to be successful. Women are invited every three to five years from their twenties to their mid-sixties.

Bowel cancer screening
Bowel screening with the faecal occult blood test (FOBT) looks for hidden traces of blood in your stools. These tiny amounts of blood can be a sign of bowel cancer, or changes in the bowel that could develop into cancer. Catching these changes early can improve the chances of successful treatment. 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. In England a new bowel screening test called flexi-scope will be introduced in the next few years. This test uses a tiny camera on the end of a flexible tube to look for growths in the bowel. This test can help prevent bowel cancer and detect the disease early.

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I noticed a lump in my breast and went to see my doctor the very next day. Within a week I was having tests and scans and I then started treatment right away. I am now living life to the full and enjoying the things I love to do like pottering round the garden and spending time with my family.

JULIA FARRELL
Breast cancer survivor
Thousands of people beat cancer every year.
When cancer is diagnosed at an early stage, treatment is 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 is mainly diagnosed in older people, with nearly nine out of 10 cases in people aged 50 and over.

In this leaflet you can find out about:
- the key signs and symptoms women should look out for
- why it is important to get these symptoms checked out by a doctor
- screening tests to prevent cancer and detect it early.

Why is spotting cancer early so important?
Cancer survival rates in the UK have doubled in the last 40 years. This is mainly because of better treatments, screening and earlier diagnosis. Almost two out of three women with breast cancer now survive the disease beyond 20 years. And when bowel cancer is caught at the earliest stage, more than nine in 10 people can be treated successfully.

But thousands more cancer deaths could be prevented each year if we improved early diagnosis and treatment even further.

So if you notice any unusual or persistent changes in your body, go and see your doctor. You have nothing to lose, but you could have everything to gain. If it is something serious, finding it at an early stage and getting treatment started promptly offers a better chance of beating the disease.

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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 for three weeks or more
- 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
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Today, more people than ever are surviving cancer