

**Greater Manchester
Healthcare Academy**



Cancer

QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE: RECOGNISING SYMPTOMS OF
CANCER IN COMMUNITY PHARMACY

INTRODUCTION

In these unprecedented times people are cautious about going to the GP or are afraid to bother them as they think there are people with more serious conditions. As a result, some people have ignored what they feel are minor symptoms and which could be early signs of cancer. With the launch of the GP CPCS, community pharmacy has the opportunity to question patients in more depth and understand if the minor ailment is actually negligible or if the symptom or sign is one of a more serious condition.

The focus of the training has been on symptoms that you may encounter whilst providing the GP CPCS service, symptoms such as pain, fever, coughing etc. When a patient or customer is referred to you or approaches you for advice, especially with Covid concerns, ask a few more appropriate questions that could help diagnose the start of a cancerous condition.

Use these quick reference guides of symptoms to help you refer the patient back to the GP if you feel that it is appropriate to do so. If still uncertain about whether a referral is needed, consider contacting the GP, discussing your concerns with them and asking for their opinion.



LUNG CANCER

Symptoms

40 and over with unexplained haemoptysis (coughing up blood)

NON -SMOKER

Have **two** or more of the following unexplained symptoms:

- COUGH
 - FATIGUE
 - SHORTNESS OF BREATH
 - CHEST PAIN
 - WEIGHT LOSS
 - APPETITE LOSS
-

SMOKER

IF THEY HAVE EVER SMOKED AND HAVE **ONE** OR MORE OF THE ABOVE MENTIONED UNEXPLAINED SYMPTOMS



BOWEL CANCER

Symptoms

Upper GIT

- DYSPHAGIA
- HAEMATEMESIS (VOMITING BLOOD)

- 55 and over with unexplained weight loss and **one** or more of the following

- UPPER ABDOMINAL PAIN
- REFLUX
- DYSPEPSIA
- NAUSEA
- VOMITING

LOWER GIT

- **40** and over with unexplained weight loss and ABDOMINAL PAIN, RECTAL BLEEDING AND CHANGES TO BOWEL HABIT
- **50** and over with unexplained RECTAL BLEEDING
- **60** and over with CHANGES IN THEIR BOWEL HABIT



BRAIN CANCER

Symptoms

- PROGRESSIVE NEUROLOGICAL DEFICIT
- NEW-ONSET SEIZURES
- MENTAL CHANGES
- HEADACHES of recent onset accompanied by
 - VOMITING
 - DROWSINESS
 - POSTURE-RELATED HEADACHE
 - TINNITUS, OROTHER NEUROLOGICAL SYMPTOMS, SUCH AS
 - BLACKOUT
 - CHANGE IN PERSONALITY
 - MEMORY



BONE CANCER

Symptoms

- BONE PAIN
begins with a feeling of tenderness and gradually progresses to a persistent or pulsating ache
- SWELLING AND INFLAMMATION
- LUMP ON OR AROUND THE AFFECTED BONE
- REDUCED MOVEMENT
- UNEXPLAINED BROKEN BONE

other symptoms that may occur or not

- FEVER
- TIREDNESS
- UNEXPLAINED WEIGHT LOSS
- NIGHT SWEATS

- 60 and over with persistent bone pain particularly back pain, or an unexplained fracture.



ORAL CANCER

Symptoms

- UNEXPLAINED ULCERATION IN THE ORAL CAVITY LASTING FOR MORE THAN 3 WEEKS OR
- A PERSISTENT AND UNEXPLAINED LUMP IN THE NECK
- A LUMP ON THE LIP OR IN THE ORAL CAVITY OR
- A RED OR RED AND WHITE PATCH IN THE ORAL CAVITY

LARYNGEAL CANCER

- 45 and over with either of these
 - PERSISTENT UNEXPLAINED HOARSENESS
 - AN UNEXPLAINED LUMP IN THE NECK



SKIN CANCER

Symptoms

Weighted 7-point checklist

MAJOR features of the lesions (scoring 2 points each):

- CHANGE IN SIZE
- IRREGULAR SHAPE
- IRREGULAR COLOUR

MINOR features of the lesions (scoring **one** point each):

- LARGEST DIAMETER 7 MM OR MORE
- INFLAMMATION
- OOZING
- CHANGE IN SENSATION



NON-SITE-SPECIFIC SYMPTOMS

“Some symptoms or symptom combinations may be features of several different cancers. For some of these symptoms, the risk for each individual cancer may be low but the total risk of cancer of any type may be higher. This section includes recommendations for these symptoms.

SYMPTOMS OF CONCERN IN ADULTS

- For people with **UNEXPLAINED WEIGHT LOSS** - a symptom of several cancers including colorectal, gastro-oesophageal, lung, prostate, pancreatic and urological cancer
- For people with **UNEXPLAINED APPETITE LOSS** - a symptom of several cancers including lung, oesophageal, stomach, colorectal, pancreatic, bladder and renal cancer
- For people with **DEEP VEIN THROMBOSIS** - associated with several cancers including urogenital, breast, colorectal and lung cancer”⁵

As a member of the primary care team, you have an essential role to play in the earlier diagnosis of cancer, especially now that more patients are going to be referred to you via the GP CPCS pathway. Remember not to cause unnecessary anxiety in the patient by referring them back to the GP and mentioning what you suspect, as only after further analysis can the diagnosis be confirmed or not.

Reassure your patients that GP services remain secure and are able to safely review and investigate any concerns regarding their condition. Also, reassure them about further investigations that they may have to do in secondary care.

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND RESOURCES

1. **Macmillan Rapid referral toolkit**
https://www.macmillan.org.uk/documents/aboutus/health_professionals/macmillanprogrammeandservices/rapid_referral_toolkit_2015_desktop_aw.pdf Accessed June 2021
2. **Rapid referral guidelines - Suspected cancer: recognition and referral NICE guidelines**
<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng12/resources/endorsed-resource-rapid-referral-guidelines-551244493> Accessed June 2021
3. **Signs and symptoms of cancer - Cancer Research UK**
<https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/cancer-symptoms>
Accessed June 2021
4. **Recommendations organised by site of cancer - Suspected cancer: recognition and referral NICE guidelines**
<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng12/chapter/1-Recommendations-organised-by-site-of-cancer#1> Accessed June 2021
5. **Suspected cancer: recognition and referral**
<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng12/resources/suspected-cancer-recognition-and-referral-pdf-1837268071621> Accessed June 2021
6. **Supporting primary care to recognise cancer in the COVID-19 era - Guidelines in Practice**
https://www.guidelinesinpractice.co.uk/cancer/supporting-primary-care-to-recognise-cancer-in-the-covid-19-era/455666.article?utm_source=MGP%20Ltd&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=12267864_20210327%20GinP%20highlights&dm_i=HEZ,7AXY0,3PC29I,TMFWI,1 Accessed June 2021
7. **NICE updates guideline on suspected cancer: recognition and referral article - Guidelines** <https://www.guidelines.co.uk/news/nice-updates-guideline-on-suspected-cancer-recognition-and-referral/455617.article> Accessed June 2021

8. Bone cancer - Symptoms - NHS

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/bone-cancer/symptoms/> Accessed June 2021

9. What are the signs and symptoms of bone cancer? - Macmillan Cancer Support

<https://www.macmillan.org.uk/cancer-information-and-support/bone-cancer/signs-and-symptoms-of-bone-cancer> Accessed June 2021