

BLADDER CANCER. SAME SYMPTOMS. DIFFERENT STORY.

Community Toolkit



The same symptoms could mean a different story.
Contact your GP practice about symptoms that could be bladder cancer.

Campaign overview

In the UK, over 20,000 people are diagnosed with bladder cancer each year, yet it is still not widely recognised as a common cancer.

RM Partners NHS Cancer Alliance for north west and south west London, in partnership with Action Bladder Cancer UK (ABC UK), is supporting a campaign to help more people recognise the signs and symptoms of bladder cancer and to contact their GP practice early.

The campaign is focusing on people over the age of 50, particularly women (where bladder cancer is more commonly overlooked, those from lower socio-economic groups as these people are most likely to experience a late-stage cancer diagnosis, and people from Black and South Asian ethnic backgrounds, who are known to experience health inequalities.

The campaign will run in areas of highest deprivation across all 14 boroughs in north west (NW) and south west (SW) London on bus shelters, social media and online search engines and will be supported by local community partnerships activity. The bladder cancer awareness campaign will run from 1st September until 30th September 2025.

- Blood in pee (even just once)
- Urinary infection (UTIs) that keeps returning
- Pain, burning or stinging when peeing
- Peeing urgently or more often than usual

These could be symptoms of bladder cancer. Contact your GP practice.

Campaign overview

The key messages include:

- Smoking is the single biggest risk factor for bladder cancer.
- Symptoms of bladder cancer can be overlooked, particularly in women, as they overlap with the symptoms of urinary tract infections (UTIs), especially, where blood in pee is caused by a urinary tract infection, or gynaecological issues including menopausal/post-menopausal symptoms.
- Women have a higher 1-year adverse survival rate than men, making early recognition and referral especially important at improving outcomes.
- Increasing symptom awareness will enable patients to consult with a healthcare professional earlier, meaning there is opportunity for earlier diagnosis and reduced late-stage diagnosis.
- About 80% of people diagnosed with stage 1 bladder cancer survive their cancer for 5 years or more compared with about 10% diagnosed at stage 4.
- When bladder cancer is diagnosed at an early stage, treatment is more likely to be successful.

The key symptoms to look out for are:

- Blood in pee (event just once)
- Urinary tract infection (UTI) that keeps returning
- Pain, burning or stinging when peeing
- Peeing urgently or more often than usual

Other symptoms include:

- Losing weight without trying to
- Feeling very tired for no reason and feeling generally unwell

Whilst it is unlikely to be bladder cancer, it's best to see a healthcare professional if you are experiencing any of these symptoms.

Campaign overview

“Recognising the symptoms of bladder cancer is key to early diagnosis. Unfortunately, some cases can be diagnosed late, leading to worse outcomes. Bladder cancer can be overlooked, particularly in women, where symptoms can be confused as urinary tract infections or gynaecological issues. It's important to never ignore blood in your urine. Be aware of the signs and visit your GP practice if you have any concerns”.

Jeannie Rigby
CEO
Action Bladder Cancer UK

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Dr Lucy Hollingworth
Deputy Medical Director
RMP & NWL Primary Care Cancer Lead

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Dr Lucy Sneddon
SWL Primary Care Clinical Director

For further information and to download shareable social media assets, visit the website at [SameSymptomsDifferentStory.com](https://www.SameSymptomsDifferentStory.com)

For more information about Action Bladder Cancer UK and their work visit www.actionbladdercanceruk.org or www.nhs.uk/conditions/bladder-cancer/

Risks and causes of bladder cancer

Smoking

Around half of all bladder cancers are caused by smoking. Smoking any type of tobacco product, including cigarettes, cigars, pipes and shisha, is the biggest cause of preventable bladder cancer in the UK.

Your risk of getting bladder cancer if you smoke is up to 4 times that of someone who has never smoked. People with the highest risk are those who:

- smoke heavily
- started smoking at a young age and continue to smoke for a long time
- have smoked for a long time

How smoking may increase your risk

Chemicals in tobacco smoke get into the bloodstream. They are then filtered out of the blood by the kidneys and end up in the urine. When the urine is stored in the bladder, these chemicals are in contact with the bladder lining.

Chemicals called arylamines are known to cause bladder cancer. Arylamines in cigarette smoke may be the cause of the increased risk.

Chemicals at work

Certain types of jobs can cause a higher risk of bladder cancer because of exposure to certain chemicals, such as those who work as within the textile industry, or those that involve handling carbon or crude oil.

Family history

You might have a slight increase in risk of bladder cancer if you have a first degree relative with bladder cancer. First degree means a parent, child, sister or brother.

Risks and causes of bladder cancer

Pelvic radiotherapy

You might have an increased risk of getting secondary bladder cancer after having radiotherapy for cancer before.

Being overweight

Some research has shown that you may be at an increased risk of getting bladder cancer if you're overweight.

Risks and causes of bladder cancer

A person's risk of developing cancer depends on many factors, including age, genetics, and risk factors (including some potentially modifiable lifestyle factors).

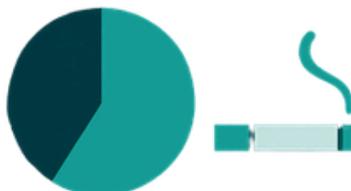
1 in 130 UK females and 1 in 55 UK males will be diagnosed with bladder cancer in their lifetime (born in 1961).



49% of bladder cancer cases in the UK are preventable.



45% of bladder cancer cases in the UK are caused by smoking.



Risks and causes of bladder cancer

Bladder cancer 10-year survival is lower in females than males.

Around 75 out of every 100 (around 75%) survive their cancer for 1 year or more after diagnosis



More than 50 out of every 100 (more than 50%) survive their cancer for 5 years or more after they are diagnosed



Around 45 out of every 100 (around 45%) survive their cancer for 10 years or more after diagnosis



Almost six in ten (55.6%) people in England diagnosed with bladder cancer in the least deprived group survive their disease for 5 years or more, compared with almost half (46.1%) of people in the most deprived group (2016-2020).

What tests or examinations to expect?

Your healthcare professional might want to investigate your symptoms further. Below are the tests and examinations you can expect.

Urine dipstick test – to detect small traces of blood (that you cannot see)

Checks for any discomfort or pain when urinating (often described as a stinging or burning sensation)

Blood test to check raised white blood cell count

If over 60 and have high levels of blood (that you cannot see) in urine and either of the previous points above, you will be referred directly onto a Urgent Suspected Cancer Referral

If under 60 – Your healthcare professional will obtain further advice and guidance from a specialist

Tips to help you prepare for your appointment or referral;

- **Update your GP practice about your smoking status (including passive smoking).**
- **Tell your healthcare professional if you have a family history of cancer, in particular bladder.**
- **Update your GP practice with your latest weight measurement.**
- **Tell your healthcare professional if you have had radiotherapy for cancer before.**
- **Tell your healthcare professional if your job involves working with chemicals.**

What does your GP need to know?

- If referred, make sure your doctor or healthcare professional has your correct address and telephone number including a mobile number if you have one as the hospital may contact you by telephone.
- If you are unable to attend appointments throughout the next four weeks, please tell your doctor or healthcare professional.
- If you need a translator, have access needs or would like a female consultant, please let the hospital know in advance of your appointment.

Your initial appointment with the hospital may be a telephone or video call with a nurse specialist.

Spreading the message

Below are examples of long and short copy that you can use to communicate about the bladder cancer awareness campaign – *BLADDER CANCER. SAME SYMPTOMS. DIFFERENT STORY.* in newsletters, emails, websites and e-bulletins.

RM Partners North West and South West London Cancer Alliance (RMP) in partnership with Action Bladder Cancer UK (ABC UK) is supporting a campaign to help more people recognise the signs and symptoms of bladder cancer and to contact their GP practice earlier. Urological Cancer Awareness Month runs throughout September.

The campaign is focusing on people over the age of 50, in particular, women and those from lower socio-economic groups as they are more likely to experience a late-stage cancer diagnosis. It will also include people in this age group from Black and South Asian ethnic backgrounds, who are already at increased risk of health inequalities.

- Smoking is the single biggest risk factor for bladder cancer.
- Symptoms of bladder cancer can be overlooked, particularly in women, as they overlap with the symptoms of urinary tract infections (UTIs), especially, where blood in pee is caused by a urinary tract infection, or gynaecological issues including menopausal/post-menopausal symptoms.
- 1-year survival rates for women is lower than men, making early recognition and referral especially important at improving outcomes.
- About 80% of people diagnosed with stage 1 bladder cancer survive their cancer for 5 years or more compared with about 10% diagnosed at stage 4. When bladder cancer is diagnosed at an early stage, treatment is more likely to be successful.

Spreading the message

The key symptoms to look out for are:

- Blood in urine (even just once)
- Urinary tract infection (UTI) that doesn't go away or keeps coming back
- Pain when passing urine
- Needing to urinate more often

Other symptoms include:

- Losing weight without trying to
- Feeling very tired for no reason and feeling generally unwell

Whilst it is less likely to be bladder cancer, it's best to see a healthcare professional if you are experiencing any of these symptoms.

The same symptoms could mean a different story.

Spreading the message

The below can be used to help spread the message.

Short Copy

Social media post and assets 2 examples of Instagram / X/Bluesky

Bluesky / X – please include @RMPartnersNHS

Instagram – please include @rmpartnersnhs @actionbladdercanceruk

Bluesky/X

Do you know the signs of bladder cancer? Blood in pee (even just once), a urine infection (UTIs) that doesn't go away or keeps coming back and pain, burning or stinging when peeing can be symptoms of bladder cancer. If you are experiencing any symptoms, get checked - contact your GP practice. For more information visit <https://samesymptomsdifferentstory.com>

#SameSymptomsDifferentStory #BladderCancerAwareness

Bluesky/X

Over 20,000 people are diagnosed with bladder cancer each year, yet it is still not widely recognised as a common cancer. Bladder cancer can be overlooked, particularly in women. It's important to never ignore blood in your pee or a urine infection (UTI) that doesn't go away or keeps coming back. Contact your GP practice. More info:<https://samesymptomsdifferentstory.com>

#SameSymptomsDifferentStory #BladderCancerAwareness

Spreading the message

Long Form

Did you know symptoms of bladder cancer can be overlooked, particularly in women?

Symptoms of bladder cancer can overlap with the symptoms of urinary tract infections (UTIs), especially, where blood in pee is caused by a UTI or gynaecological issues including menopausal/post-menopausal symptoms.

The bladder cancer awareness campaign – SAME SYMPTOMS. DIFFERENT STORY. highlights key symptoms of bladder cancer and reminds people, especially women, to contact their GP practice early to get their symptoms checked.

The key symptoms to look out for are:

- Blood in pee (even just once)
- Urinary tract infection (UTIs) that doesn't go away or keeps coming back
- Pain, burning, or stinging when peeing
- Peeing more urgently or more often than usual

Other symptoms include:

- Losing weight without trying to
- feeling very tired for no reason and feeling generally unwell

Whilst it is unlikely to be bladder cancer, it's best to see a healthcare professional if you are experiencing any of these symptoms. The same symptoms could mean a different story.

Early cancer diagnosis saves lives.

For more information visit: <https://samesymptomsdifferentstory.com>
#SameSymptomsDifferentStory #BladderCancerAwareness

Spreading the message

Instagram

Did you know smoking any tobacco product is the biggest cause of preventable bladder cancer in the UK? 45% of bladder cancer cases in the UK are caused by smoking.

When bladder cancer is diagnosed at an early stage, treatment is more likely to be successful.

Please don't ignore the signs:

- Blood in urine (even just once)
- Urinary infection (UTIs) that doesn't go away or keeps coming back
- Pain when passing urine
- Needing to urinate more often

Other symptoms include:

- Losing weight without trying to
- feeling very tired for no reason and feeling generally unwell.

Whilst it is unlikely to be bladder cancer, it's best to see a healthcare professional if you are experiencing any of these symptoms. The same symptoms could mean a different story.

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**Find out more information at
SameSymptomsDifferentStory.com**