

NICE: SUSPECTED CANCER RECOGNITION AND REFERRAL SYMPTOM REFERENCE GUIDE

KEY

- No time specified
- 2WW
- Routine
- Within 2 weeks
- Within 48h
- 2ww breast
- 2ww CRC
- 2ww gynae
- 2ww head and neck
- 2ww haematology
- 2ww lung
- 2ww Sarcoma
- 2ww skin
- 2ww urology
- 2ww Upper GI
- Abdominal and pelvic USS
- Appointment with dentist within 2w
- Assess for other symptoms/ signs then 2ww referral/ further urgent investigation
- Assess for other clinical causes/ monitor in primary care
- CA-125
- Consider Paediatrician referral
- MRI/CT within 2w
- CT/USS within 2w
- CXR within 2w
- Direct access USS within 2w
- OGD within 2w
- Fbc within 48 hours
- Fbc, Ca²⁺ + ESR/PV
- FOBT
- Gynae USS
- Immediate referral to Paediatrician
- Non-urgent referral via urology pathway
- Ophthalmologist referral within 2w
- Paediatrician appointment within 48h
- PSA + DRE
- Routine OGD
- Routine referral
- Routine USS
- Urine protein electrophoresis and BJP within 48h
- USS within 48h
- Xray within 48h

KEY
 A: raised; 2ww: 2 week wait; 40+: 40 and over etc; BCC: basal cell carcinoma; BJP: Bence-Jones protein urine test; CRC: colorectal cancer; CXR: chest Xray; DRE: Digital rectal examination; DVT: Deep vein thrombosis; ESR/PV: Erythrocyte sedimentation rate or plasma viscosity; Fbc: full blood count; FOBT: Faecal occult blood test; GOR: Gastro-oesophageal reflux; IDA: Iron deficiency anaemia; LUTS: Lower urinary tract symptoms; N/V: nausea/vomiting; OGD: upper GI endoscopy; PSA: Prostate specific antigen; SCC: squamous cell carcinoma; SOB: shortness of breath; USS: ultrasound scan; wbc: white blood cell.

NON-SPECIFIC SYMPTOMS

APPETITE LOSS

Unexplained: consider: lung, upper GI, CRC, pancreatic, urological: 15
 Ever smoked/asbestos exposed 40+: 19
 With cough/fatigue/SOB/chest pain/weight loss 40+: 19
 Or early satiety persistent >12x per month in women especially in 50+: 15

DVT:
 consider urogenital/breast/CRC/ lung cancers: 15

DIABETES
 New onset with weight loss 60+: 18

FATIGUE
 Ever smoked/asbestos exposed 40+: 19
 With cough/SOB/chest pain/weight loss/appetite loss (unexplained) 40+: 19
 Persistent 16+: 22
 Unexplained in women: 15

FEVER
 Unexplained: 22
 Unexplained with splenomegaly/ lymphadenopathy 16+: 5

FINGER CLUBBING 40+: 19
INFECTION
 Unexplained and persistent/ recurrent 16+: 22

NIGHT SWEATS
 With unexplained splenomegaly/ lymphadenopathy 16+: 5

PALLOR: 22

PRURITUS:
 With unexplained splenomegaly/ lymphadenopathy 16+: 5

WEIGHT LOSS
 Unexplained: consider: lung, upper GI, CRC, pancreatic, urological: 15
 Unexplained with abdominal pain 40+: 2
 Unexplained with rectal bleeding <50: 2
 Unexplained without rectal bleeding 50+: 24
 Ever smoked/asbestos exposed 40+: 19
 With cough/fatigue/SOB/chest pain/appetite loss 40+ never smoked: 19
 With unexplained splenomegaly/ lymphadenopathy 16+: 5
 With upper abdominal pain/GOR/ dyspepsia 55+: 21
 Unexplained in women: 15
 With diarrhoea/nausea/vomiting/ constipation 60+: 18
 With back pain/abdominal pain/ new onset diabetes 60+: 18
 With ^platelets/nausea/vomiting 55+: 31

BLEEDING

BLEEDING
 Unexplained bruising, bleeding, petechiae: 22
 Haematemesis: 31
 Haemoptysis 40+: 6
 Post-menopausal: 3
 Rectal bleeding with abdominal pain/change in bowel habit/weight loss/IDA <50: 2
 Rectal 50+: 2
 Vulval: 3

LUMPS/MASSES

LUMPS/MASSES
 Anal: 2
 Axillary 30+: 1
 Breast 30+: 1
 Breast <30: 62
 Lip/oral cavity: 12*
 Lump increasing in size: 20
 Neck (unexplained) 45+: 4
 Neck (persistent and unexplained): 4
 Penile (STI excluded): 9
 Thyroid: 4
 Vaginal/vulval (unexplained): 3

LYMPHADENOPATHY
 Unexplained in adults: 5
 Supraclavicular/persistent cervical 40+: 19
 Generalised in adults: 22

PAIN

PAIN
 Alcohol induced lymph node pain with lymphadenopathy: 5
 Back with weight loss 60+: 18
 Back (persistent) 60+: 25
 Chest (unexplained) 40+ ever smoked/asbestos exposed: 19
 Chest (unexplained) with cough/ fatigue/SOB/weight loss/appetite loss 40+: 19

SKIN

SKIN OR SURFACE SYMPTOMS
 Anal ulceration: 2
 Bruising: 22
 Nipple: unilateral changes (including those "of concern") 50+: 1
 Penile lesion/mass (STI excluded): 9
 Penile symptoms affecting the foreskin/glans: 9
 Petechiae (unexplained): 22
 Skin change suggesting breast cancer: 1
 Pigmented lesion with a weighted 7 point score 3+: 8
 Lesion suggestive of nodular melanoma: 8
 Lesion suggestive of SCC: 8
 Lesion suggestive of BCC: 32
 Lesion suggestive of BCC & concern that treatment delay may have a significant impact: 8
 Vulval lump/ulceration (unexplained): 3

SKELETAL

SKELETAL SYMPTOMS
 Back pain with weight loss 60+: 18
 Back pain (persistent) 60+: 25
 Bone pain (persistent) 60+: 23
 Fracture (unexplained) 60+: 23

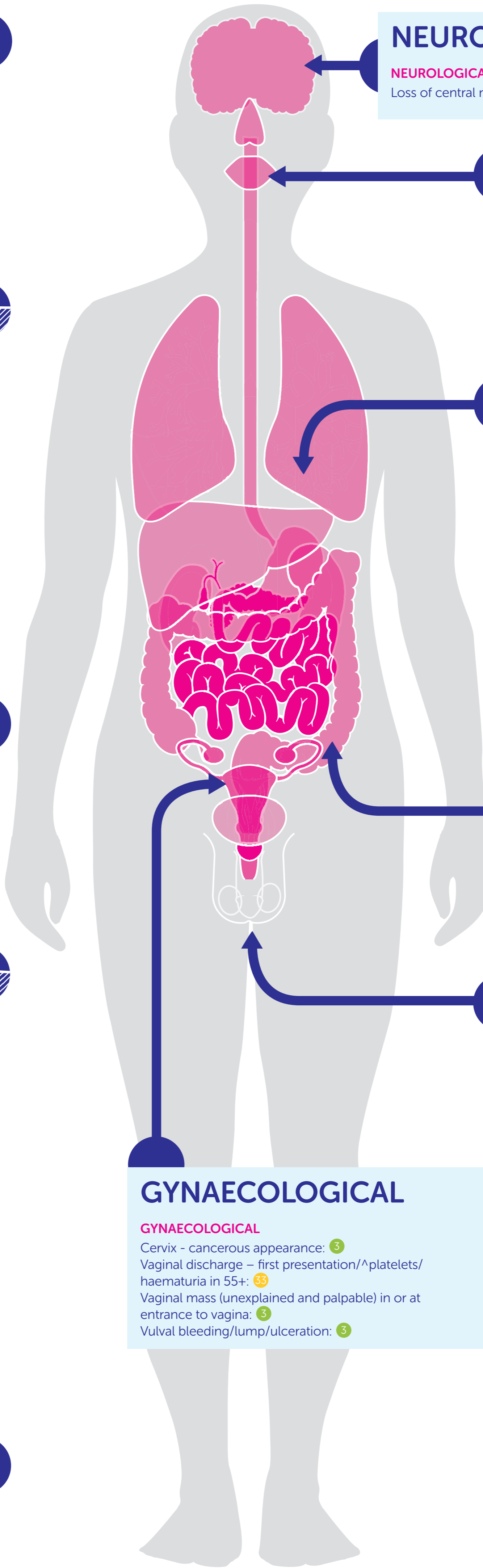
INVESTIGATION FINDINGS

ANAEMIA (IDA)
 60+: 2
 With rectal bleeding <50: 2
 Without rectal bleeding <60: 24

ANAEMIA (NORMOCYTIC)
 Without rectal bleeding 60+: 24
 Visible haematuria women 55+: 25
 Upper abdominal pain 55+: 31

BJP SUGGESTS MYELOMA: 5
 ^BLOOD GLUCOSE WITH VISIBLE HAEMATURIA IN WOMEN 55+: 25

CA-125 35+IU/ML: 11
CA-125 <35IU/ML OR >35IU/ML WITH NORMAL ULTRASOUND: 14
 ^CA²⁺/LOW WBC AND CONSISTENT WITH MYELOMA 60+: 34



NEUROLOGICAL

NEUROLOGICAL
 Loss of central neurological function (progressive): 17

ORAL LESIONS

ORAL LESIONS
 Ulceration (unexplained, >3w): 4
 Oral red / red & white patches: 12*

RESPIRATORY

RESPIRATORY
 Chest infection (persistent or recurrent) 40+: 19
 Chest pain (unexplained) 40+ ever smoked/asbestos exposed: 19
 Chest pain (unexplained) with cough/fatigue/SOB/weight loss/ appetite loss 40+: 19
 Cough (unexplained) 40+ ever smoked/asbestos exposed: 19
 Cough (unexplained) with chest pain/fatigue/SOB/weight loss/ appetite loss 40+: 19
 Hoarseness (unexplained and persistent) 45+: 4
 Chest signs consistent with cancer/ pleural disease 40+: 19
 Finger clubbing 40+: 19

SHORTNESS OF BREATH
 Ever smoked/asbestos exposed 40+: 19
 With cough/fatigue/chest pain/ weight loss/appetite loss 40+: 19
 With unexplained lymphadenopathy: 5
 With unexplained splenomegaly: 5

UROLOGICAL

UROLOGICAL SYMPTOMS
 Erectile dysfunction: 30
 Haematuria (visible and unexplained) without UTI 45+: 9
 Haematuria (visible and unexplained) with persistence/recurrence after treatment for UTI 45+: 9
 Haematuria (non visible and unexplained) with dysuria/^blood test wbc 60+: 9
 Haematuria (visible) with low Hb/ ^platelets / ^ blood glucose / unexplained vaginal discharge in women 55+: 25**
 Haematuria (visible) in men: 30
 Testicular enlargement/shape change/texture change (non-painful): 9
 Testicular symptoms (unexplained/ persistent): 33
 UTI (unexplained and recurrent/ persistent) 60+: 27
 LUTS in males: 30
 Urinary urgency (persistent or >12x per month) in women especially 50+: 15

ABDOMINAL

ABDOMINAL DISTENSION
 Persistent or >12 times per month in women especially 50+: 15

ABDOMINAL/PELVIC/RECTAL MASS
 Suggestive of ovarian pathology: 5
 Abdominal/rectal: 2
 Splenomegaly: 5
 Upper abdomen (consistent with liver/gall bladder): 20
 Upper abdomen (consistent with stomach cancer): 10
 Hepatosplenomegaly: 22

ABDOMINAL/PELVIC PAIN
 Abdominal pain with weight loss in 40+: 2
 Abdominal pain with rectal bleeding in <50: 2
 Abdominal pain without rectal bleeding in 50+: 24
 Upper abdominal pain with weight loss in 55+: 21
 Upper abdominal pain with any of: anaemia, ^platelets, nausea, vomiting in 55+: 31
 Persistent or >12 times per month in women especially 50+: 15
 Abdominal pain with weight loss in 60+: 18
 IBS symptoms within 12 months in women 50+: 15

ASCITES +/OR PELVIC OR ABDOMINAL MASS 3

CHANGE IN BOWEL PATTERN
 Unexplained 60+: 2
 Unexplained with rectal bleeding <50: 2
 Without rectal bleeding <60: 24
 Unexplained in females: 15
 Diarrhoea/constipation with weight loss 60+: 18
 IBS symptoms within 12 months in women 50+: 15

DYSPEPSIA
 With weight loss in 55+: 21
 Treatment resistant 55+: 31
 55+ with ^platelets/N/V: 31

DYSPHAGIA 21

NAUSEA OR VOMITING
 With weight loss 60+: 18
 With ^platelets/weight loss/reflux/ dyspepsia/upper abdominal pain in 55+: 31

RECTAL EXAMINATION
 Prostate feels malignant: 9

REFLUX
 With weight loss in 55+: 21
 With ^platelets/nausea/vomiting 55+: 31

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

ABDOMINAL SYMPTOMS
 Hepatosplenomegaly: 26
 Abdominal mass or enlarged abdominal organ: 29
 Splenomegaly: 29

BLEEDING/BRUISING/RASHES
 Petechiae: (unexplained): 26
 Bruising/bleeding (unexplained): 22

LUMPS/MASSES
 Lymphadenopathy (unexplained): 29
 Lymphadenopathy (generalised): 22
 Lump (unexplained) increasing in size: 35

NEUROLOGICAL
 New abnormality of cerebellar or CNS function: 29

NON-SPECIFIC SYMPTOMS
 Fatigue (persistent): 22
 Fever with lymphadenopathy/ splenomegaly (unexplained): 29
 Fever (unexplained): 22
 Infection (unexplained and persistent): 22
 Night sweats with lymphadenopathy/ splenomegaly: 29

Pruritus with lymphadenopathy/ splenomegaly: 29
 Weight loss with lymphadenopathy/ splenomegaly: 29
 Parental concern (persistent): 16

PRIMARY CARE INVESTIGATIONS
 USS/CXR suggest sarcoma: 29
 Absent red reflex: 28

RESPIRATORY
 SOB with lymphadenopathy: 29
 SOB with splenomegaly (unexplained): 29

SKELETAL
 Bone pain (persistent or unexplained): 22
 Bone pain/swelling (unexplained): 36

SKIN/SURFACE
 Bruising (unexplained): 22
 Pallor: 22

UROLOGICAL
 Haematuria (visible and unexplained): 29

This is a summary of the NICE guidelines for suspected cancer (NG12). The information in this summary is correct to the best of our knowledge but does not replace clinical judgement. The full guidelines can be found here: <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng12>