



Dr David Isaac

# Know 4 sure: How GPs can help with the cancer symptoms campaign

[naedi.org/beclearoncancer/know4sure](http://naedi.org/beclearoncancer/know4sure)

**The NHS is piloting a campaign in your area to raise awareness of four key signs of cancer. We would value your support.**

## What is Be Clear on Cancer?

Be Clear on Cancer aims to improve early diagnosis of cancer by raising awareness of symptoms and encouraging people to see their GP earlier. The Department of Health reviews the latest evidence and engages with experts to develop key messages for the campaigns, testing them locally and regionally, with a view to then rolling them out nationally.

**'Achieving earlier diagnosis of cancer is complex and, as well as improving treatments and access to diagnostics, it's important to keep running these campaigns to grow public awareness of key cancer symptoms and to promote earlier presentation to primary care services.'**

Professor Sir Mike Richards, National Cancer Director

## What is different about this campaign?

Following several tumour-specific cancer awareness campaigns, Be Clear on Cancer has become a well-recognised brand. Therefore it is timely to pilot a more general cancer symptoms approach that will work alongside them. 'Know 4 sure' is the headline for this new Be Clear on Cancer campaign – it will be used in all the adverts and materials.

## Why run this cancer symptoms campaign?

Awareness of signs and symptoms of cancer is low and we know that people can delay going to see their GP for a number of reasons.

But with more than 200 types of cancer, the Department of Health can't continue to produce individual campaigns.

So, this campaign will focus on four key symptoms that are indicators for a number of cancers, including less common ones.

## What is the key message for the public?

### Know 4 sure

When it comes to cancer, there are 4 key signs to look out for:

1. Unexplained blood that doesn't come from an obvious injury
2. An unexplained lump
3. Unexplained weight loss, which feels significant to you
4. Any type of unexplained pain that doesn't go away

Chances are it's nothing serious, but finding it early makes it more treatable. So if you notice any of these signs, tell your doctor.

## Why focus on these four signs of cancer?

Working with a panel of experts and clinicians, including GPs, the Department of Health selected these symptoms based on clinical predictors of cancer and the findings of research into the most commonly reported symptoms by cancer patients. The campaign message was then tested with a sample of GPs, as well as the target audience. The campaign leaflet also includes other possible cancer symptoms.

## Who is the campaign aimed at?

Men and women aged 50 and over, as there is a high incidence of cancer in this age group. It is also aimed at their key influencers, such as friends and family.

## What's happening in your local area and when?

Cancer Networks are working with the Department of Health to develop activities aimed at reaching people in your community. These will run from 14 January to mid-March 2013 – all will include advertising, for example in local press, and some may include community-based work, such as local events.

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## More about cancer

- **It is estimated that up to 10,000 cancer deaths could be avoided each year through earlier diagnosis and access to optimal treatment**
- **Almost 9 in 10 cancers in England are diagnosed in people aged 50 and over**
- **More than 1 in 3 people in England will develop some form of cancer during their lifetime**

**'As GPs, we have a key role to play in the earlier diagnosis of cancer and helping to improve survival rates. As well as making time for anyone that comes to us to discuss possible symptoms, it's important to keep the main risk factors for cancer in mind, such as smoking and alcohol, when talking to any patients over 50. With 'Know 4 sure' promoting symptoms that are linked to a number of different cancers, we need to be ready and make best use of the range of diagnostic tests and referral routes available to us.'**

Dr Russell Thorpe, GP from Lancashire

### What to expect during the campaign

The Department of Health is initially piloting the campaign on a relatively small scale, so it can assess the impact on primary and secondary care, and test the feasibility of this different approach. We don't know exactly how many people will respond to the campaign and you are likely to see more people coming to your practice with symptoms.

However, experience of previous tumour-specific Be Clear on Cancer campaigns suggests that any increase will be manageable. The national bowel cancer campaign that ran from January to March 2012, and included TV advertising, equated to approximately one additional patient with relevant symptoms per practice every two weeks.

### Presentation of other conditions

Although the messages in the campaign focus on persistent, new or unexplained symptoms, some patients that come and see you may prove not to have cancer. But they may still need treatment for something else. For example, during a previous lung cancer campaign, some patients presenting with relevant symptoms were diagnosed with other respiratory conditions.

### Assessment and referral

GPs will of course need to exercise their clinical judgement. Not every patient who presents to their GP with these symptoms will need to be referred using an urgent two-week referral. Standard outpatient referral and/or straight to test referrals may also be suitable for some patients. Or it may be appropriate to initially carry out tests or monitor patients in primary care.

There is lots of information to support you with the diagnosis of cancer, including the [NICE referral guidelines for suspected cancer](#). Other useful resources include [Cancer Decision Support Tools](#); several NICE [online educational tools](#) focused on cancer; a toolkit for GPs, '[Improving Diagnosis of Cancer](#)'; and '[Direct access to diagnostic tests for cancer: best practice referral pathways for general practitioners](#)'.

### What about the impact on secondary care?

Cancer Networks are working closely with NHS Trusts across their regions to prepare for the campaign. They have learned from the experiences of the previous Be Clear on Cancer campaigns and will continue to work with their local clinical leads to monitor the capacity needs of their regions throughout the nine-week campaign.

The Department of Health has allocated funding for the additional costs of diagnostic tests and treatments resulting from work to improve earlier diagnosis.

### Three things you can do

- 1 Be mindful.** The campaign may prompt people who have previously ignored their symptoms to come along to your surgery. Keep a look out for those most at risk - they may be coming to see you about other things or it might be an opportunity for further assessment.
- 2 Make the most of available support.** Your [Cancer Network](#) has a GP lead – they can give you further information relating to your local area and tell you everything you need to know about planned activity.
- 3 Encourage your colleagues to prepare for the campaign.** Practice nurses, receptionists and practice managers all have an important role to play in this campaign. There is a separate [briefing sheet for practice teams](#). Ensure everyone is aware of the campaign, so they can support it – prepare for more patients coming to your practice as a result of the campaign.

### Find out more about the 'Know 4 sure' campaign

- **Information and resources for GPs and practice teams are available at:**  
[www.naedi.org/beclearoncancer/know4sure](http://www.naedi.org/beclearoncancer/know4sure)
- **From 14 January, the public-facing website is**  
[www.nhs.uk/know4sure](http://www.nhs.uk/know4sure)