

For health professionals



CANCER
RESEARCH
UK

Together we will beat cancer

Encouraging patients to present without delay

Cancer Research UK has launched a short 30 second **film** encouraging people to get in touch with their GP without delay if they have a symptom that they're concerned about or have noticed a change that is unusual for them. Because the risk of cancer increases with age, we are particularly interested in encouraging people aged 50 and over to seek help.

Why are we promoting this film?

This is in response to intelligence which suggests that the number of people with symptoms seeking help from their GP fell significantly during the pandemic, particularly in the early weeks of lockdown. This has contributed to significant reductions in the numbers of people being referred urgently for suspected cancer and is a cause for concern. We are worried about a significant backlog of people with undiagnosed cancer that is building up as the pandemic continues. Delays in diagnosis could mean poorer outcomes for some patients.

How are we promoting this film?

The film is being advertised on daytime TV and Facebook, UK-wide from 1 June 2020 for a period of one month. The short film has previously been shared via various social channels and on our website, where it received positive feedback. NHS England have also supported by sharing the film via their channels.

Do national stakeholders know that we are doing this?

Yes. Colleagues at PHE, NHS England, Scottish Government, Public Health Wales and Public Health Agency (NI) have been informed that we are running this activity.

Our intelligence suggests that more people are contacting their GP than they were in the early weeks of lockdown, and this is likely to have been supported by recent campaign activity undertaken by the NHS (in England and Scotland) to reinforce that the NHS is 'open for business'. However, GP attendance is not yet back to pre-COVID levels, and national partners welcome activity to help reinforce the messages around help-seeking.

Watch the film at cruk.org/coronavirus-video

What if a patient is worried about the risk of being infected by COVID-19?

We appreciate that patients may be worried about the risk of being infected by COVID-19. That's why we have produced this film to help make people aware that many GP practices have telephone and/or video consultation options to talk through their concerns with their GP. Speaking to a health professional does not always require a person to visit the practice, at least not in the first instance.

What about mitigating the impact of COVID-19 on patients with suspected cancer symptoms?

Patients should be urgently referred as normal however if that is not possible patients should be safely monitored in primary care. Robust safety netting protocols are more important than ever for mitigating the impact of COVID-19 on patients.

Download our **COVID-19 Safety Netting Guidance** which summarises our recommendations on safety netting for a range of scenarios during the COVID-19 pandemic, setting out what to do if the patient has suspected cancer or if symptoms change or worsen, and when to re-consult if symptoms persist.

Key messages for your patients

If your practice would like to support the film and has capacity to do so, we recommend the following key messages be added to your practice website or communicated via a text message to your patients:

- Your GP practice is open, and we are operating in a safe way during the pandemic
- You should contact us if you notice a change that isn't normal for you or if you have a symptom that you are worried about
- If you need to get in touch, we are ready to help you safely. You will be able to talk through your concerns on the phone or via a video consultation (if you need to be seen it will be in a non-COVID area/GP practice to add individual details on safety procedure)
- If needed, we can arrange tests in the safest way possible.
- If you need to see your GP or specialist, they will follow strict guidance on infection control to protect themselves and other patients. This might include wearing personal protective equipment and restricting the number of people allowed on the premises at any one time.