



Lines open Mon - Fri 10am - 6pm

**0808 801 0338**

Free to call from all landlines and mobiles

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## Cancer

Cancer is one of the most talked about and feared illnesses in the world. It is caused when the body's cells grow rapidly and abnormally and form tumours or lumps. These can be benign (non-cancerous) or malignant (cancerous).

One in three people will get cancer at some time in their lives, and we all know someone who has. However:

- Most cancers occur in older people.
- Of all the people in Scotland who get cancer every year, **only 0.6% will be aged 15-24 and 80% of them will recover and survive.**

New cancer treatments are being developed all the time but the key to survival is early detection and treatment. That is why you need to know what to look for and what to do, both for yourself and for your friends and family.

### Lessen the odds

There is no way of preventing cancer occurring in later life, but there are steps you can take which lessen your risk of contracting it.

- Don't smoke
- Eat five portions of fruit and veg a day
- Exercise regularly
- Don't drink a lot of alcohol
- Protect yourself from the sun

### Some types of cancer

#### *Breast cancer*

This is the most common type of cancer in women. The majority of lumps in breasts are not due to cancer – they are cysts or naturally occurring lumps. Check your breasts regularly and visit your GP if you are worried about anything. Remember a lot of women have naturally lumpy breasts – you need to get to know yours so you can tell when there are changes.

Here's how to check them yourself.

- Check each month just after your period
- Look in the mirror first with your arms at your sides, then on your hips and then above your head
- Check your right breast and armpit with your left hand and vice versa
- You are looking for any lumps, changes in the nipples, changes in shape, size or skin

There are different treatments for breast cancer and these include removing the lump (and sometimes the breast), chemotherapy and radiotherapy.



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### *Cervical cancer*

This is cancer of the cervix (the neck of the womb). It can take many years to develop and often doesn't have obvious symptoms. The doctor or nurse can test for abnormal cells in your cervix (not always cancerous) by taking a smear and sending it off to be tested. You should have a smear test every three years after you start having sex. (Remember you can ask for a female doctor or nurse if you prefer.) The HPV vaccine is offered to S2 girls in Scotland and is designed to protect girls from developing cervical cancer later in life. The vaccine protects against the two types of HPV that can cause 70 per cent of the cases of cervical cancer. It does not protect against all other types, so regular cervical screening will still be necessary from the age 20 onwards.

Cervical cancer can be treated using chemotherapy, radiotherapy and surgery or a combination. This depends on how advanced the cancer is.

### *Skin cancer*

Cases of skin cancer are increasing, and the main cause is over-exposure to sunlight. You must keep an eye on any moles you have (and look out for new ones) for changes in shape, size or colour. If they change, itch or bleed, get them checked by your GP. Cancerous moles can be removed by surgery, freezing or radiation.

Always use protection in the sun (even the Scottish sun!) with factor 15 or more lotion, hats and t-shirts. Never use sunbeds.

### *Testicular cancer*

Testicular cancer is rare but it mainly affects younger men. Detection and treatment are improving and the survival rate is currently over 95%. The main symptom is a lump or swelling in one of your testicles. Most lumps are not cancerous but you do need to get every change checked out. Here's how to check yourself:

- Check once a month after a bath or shower
- Gently roll each testicle between your thumb and index finger
- It is normal to have one testicle bigger than the other
- There are also lumpy bits at the back of your testicles which are quite normal

If a lump is found to be cancerous the testicle will be removed but a prosthesis (fake testicle) can be put in. Radiotherapy and chemotherapy may also be needed.

### *Brain tumours*

Cancers in the brain put pressure on the skull and cause symptoms such as dizziness, nausea and headaches. Only a very tiny amount of headaches turn out to be caused by brain tumours.



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We don't know what causes brain tumours but we do know that it is not because of your lifestyle. Different treatments can be used but it depends on where the tumour is and how severe it is. Treatment includes steroids, radiotherapy and removing the tumour.

### *Blood cancers*

**Leukaemia** is a name for different types of cancer of the white blood cells. When you have leukaemia they grow abnormally and very quickly in your bone marrow (tissue in the centre of your bones). This means that there is less room for other types of blood cells to grow that you need to stay healthy.

There is no one cause of leukaemia, but like other cancers, different reasons can lead to someone developing it, for example genetics or things in the environment. Leukaemia is usually treated using chemotherapy over a period of several months. Sometimes people are given a bone marrow transplant as well. Only a small amount of new bone marrow is injected in as it produces new cells, so often a close relative can donate it.

**Lymphomas** are a group of cancers that affect the lymphatic system. This is a network of tubes, glands and organs which carry nutrients, waste and white blood cells around the body. There are lots of different types of lymphomas, and they are divided into two groups: Hodgkin lymphomas and non Hodgkin lymphomas. Hodgkin lymphomas tend to affect younger people and there is a high success rate with treatment. Non Hodgkin lymphomas are more serious but mainly affect older people.

It isn't certain what causes lymphomas, but they occur when white blood cells in the lymphatic system behave and divide abnormally. This can occur in other parts of the body as well as the lymphatic system. Lymphomas are treated by chemotherapy and/or radiation, depending on the type and how long you have had it. Some people have bone marrow transplants.

### **More info**

General

[www.bbc.co.uk/health/physical\\_health/conditions/in\\_depth/cancer/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/health/physical_health/conditions/in_depth/cancer/)

[www.macmillan.org.uk](http://www.macmillan.org.uk)

[www.teenagecancertrust.org](http://www.teenagecancertrust.org)

Cervical cancer: [www.jotrust.co.uk](http://www.jotrust.co.uk)

Breast cancer: [www.breastcancercare.org.uk](http://www.breastcancercare.org.uk)

Testicular cancer: [www.checkemlads.com](http://www.checkemlads.com)

Skin cancer: [www.sunsmart.org.uk](http://www.sunsmart.org.uk)

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