

Book of Cancer

Cancer Life Series



learn about it
deal with it
live with it
beat it

www.cancerhub.uk

help@cancerhub.uk

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Foreword



Cancer is a word that is equally *frightening* and *heavyweight*. It's a diagnosis that dramatically changes lives. It results in battles fought in hospitals, homes, hearts and minds. Cancer is a journey marked by uncertainty, resilience, hope and *perhaps* acceptance.

This is *my* Book of Cancer. I'm living with the effects of stage 3 bowel cancer and have to deal with the day-to-day *issues* of managing a permanent [stoma](#). My stoma has a *personality*. I named *him* Steve! Steve is a bloody narcissist, he is selfish, has zero manners, and when he *demand*s attention, he simply must have it, or I have to deal with the consequences. Steve is a real *pain the arse* (bowel cancer humour). However, as my oncologist pointed out – *Steve saved my life!* My psychologist (yes, I needed one) recommended I share my story, so you can read it here: <https://www.cancerhub.uk/steve>.



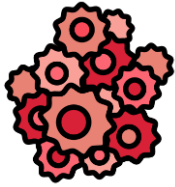
Be a patient, a loved one, a caregiver, or simply someone who wants to raise awareness of cancer's issues, this book aims to simplify complex information. I chose to *launch* using big pictures and a big font to make reading easy. Research at 3M Corporation concluded that we process visuals 60,000 times faster than text.

Version 1 deals with the UK's top 4 cancers. These 4 cancers are responsible for about 50% of all UK cancer fatalities. *Perhaps version 2 will include more cancers (who knows)*. This book is based on [my website](#) and the video shorts posted on social media. I hope you find it useful and informative.

Cancer Terminology



Tumour



A **tumour** is a swelling or mass of abnormal tissue that forms when cells grow uncontrollably. Tumours can be **benign** (non-cancerous) or **malignant** (cancerous), with malignant tumours having the potential to invade nearby tissues and spread to other parts of the body.

Primary cancer

1

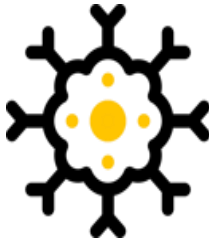
Primary cancer refers to the location of original cancer. Breast cancer is cancer that starts in the breast, bowel cancer starts in the bowel, and so on. When a cancer spreads to other parts of the body it does not become a new cancer. So, if your bowel cancer spreads to your liver, it does not become liver cancer. It is still bowel cancer.

Secondary cancer

2

Secondary cancer is the same type of cancer as the original (primary) cancer - it has migrated to other parts of the body. The medical term used for this is metastatic (pronounced meta-static).

Metastatic cancer



Metastatic cancer, in most cases, is NOT curable. Treatment can slow tumour growth and ease many of the symptoms. Metastatic cancer has the same name as the primary cancer. For example, breast cancer that spreads to the lung is called metastatic breast cancer, not lung cancer. It is treated as stage 4 breast cancer, not as lung cancer.

Remission



Remission means your signs and symptoms of cancer have gone away. If you have no more signs or symptoms at all, it's a complete remission. If you still have some but not as many as before, it's a partial remission. Remission doesn't necessarily mean your cancer has been cured. It means the disease is under control.

5-year survival rates

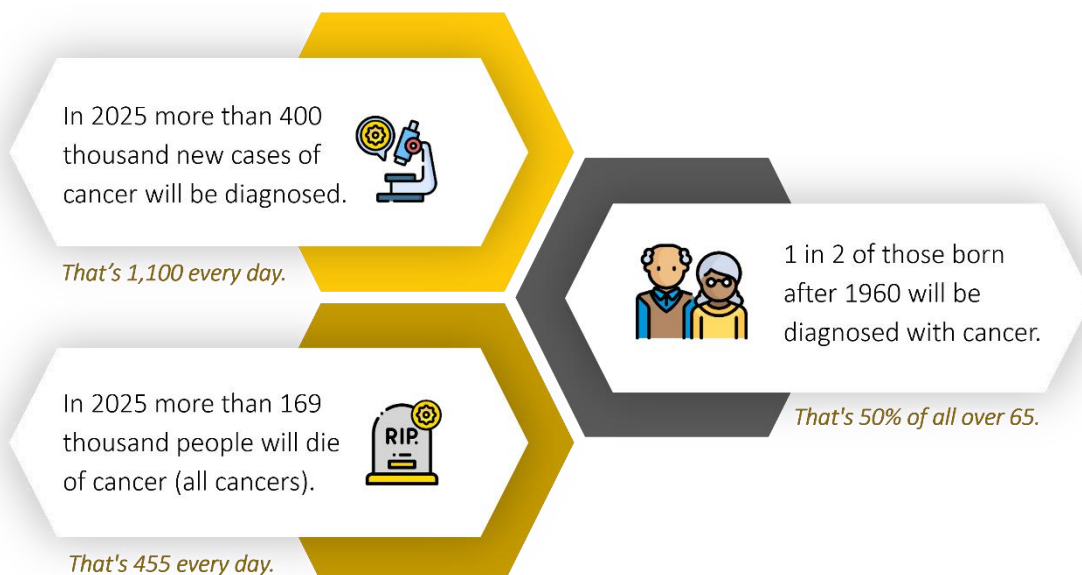
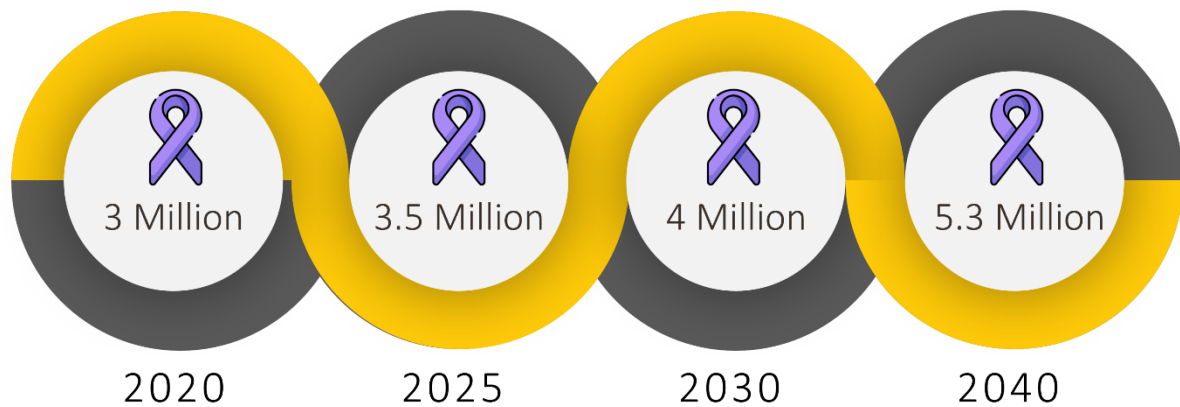


5-year survival rates refer to the percentage of people who are still alive five years after their diagnosis. These rates vary widely depending on the type of cancer, its stage at diagnosis, and available treatments.

UK Cancer Numbers



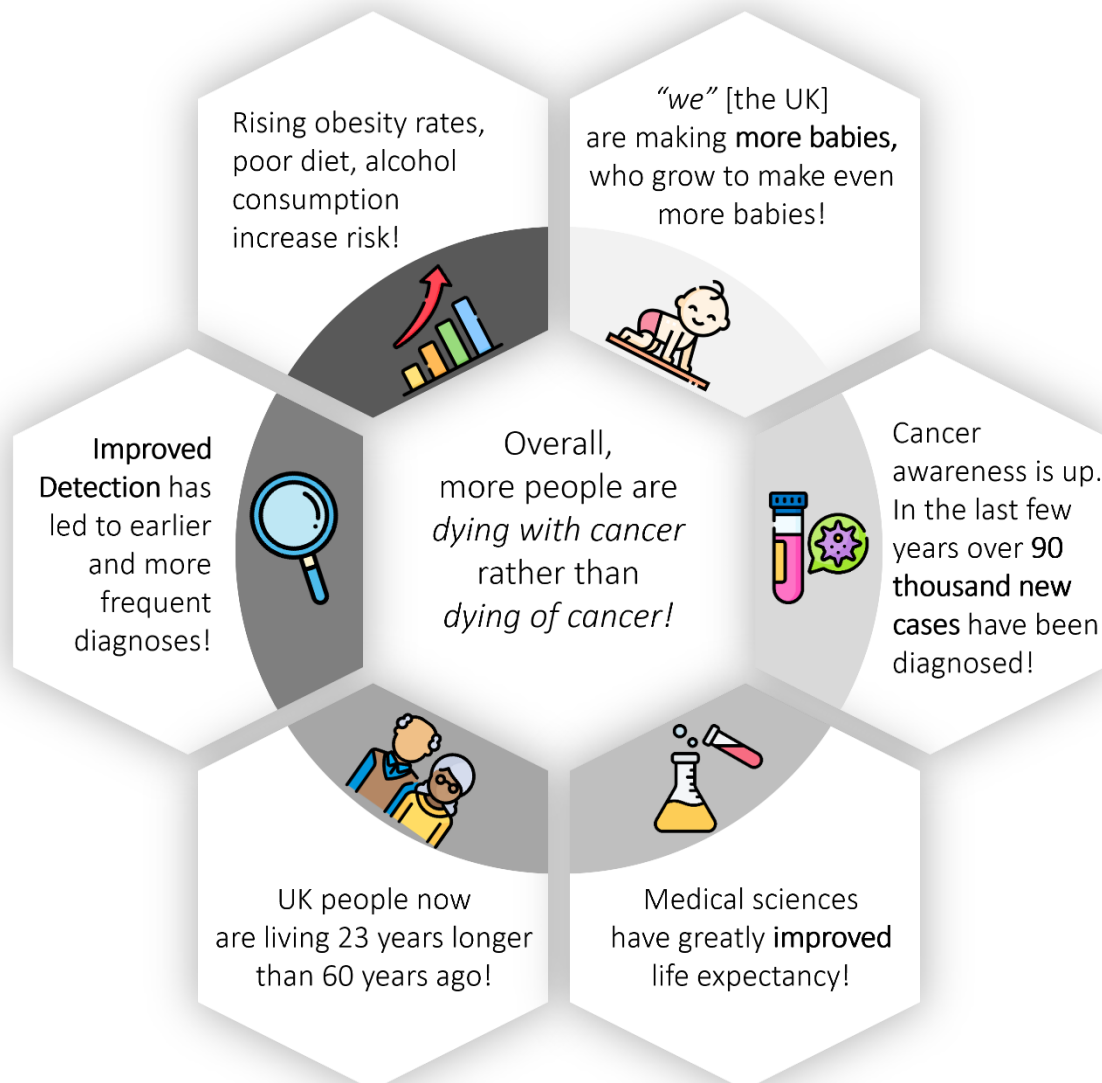
Past, present and future cancer patient numbers



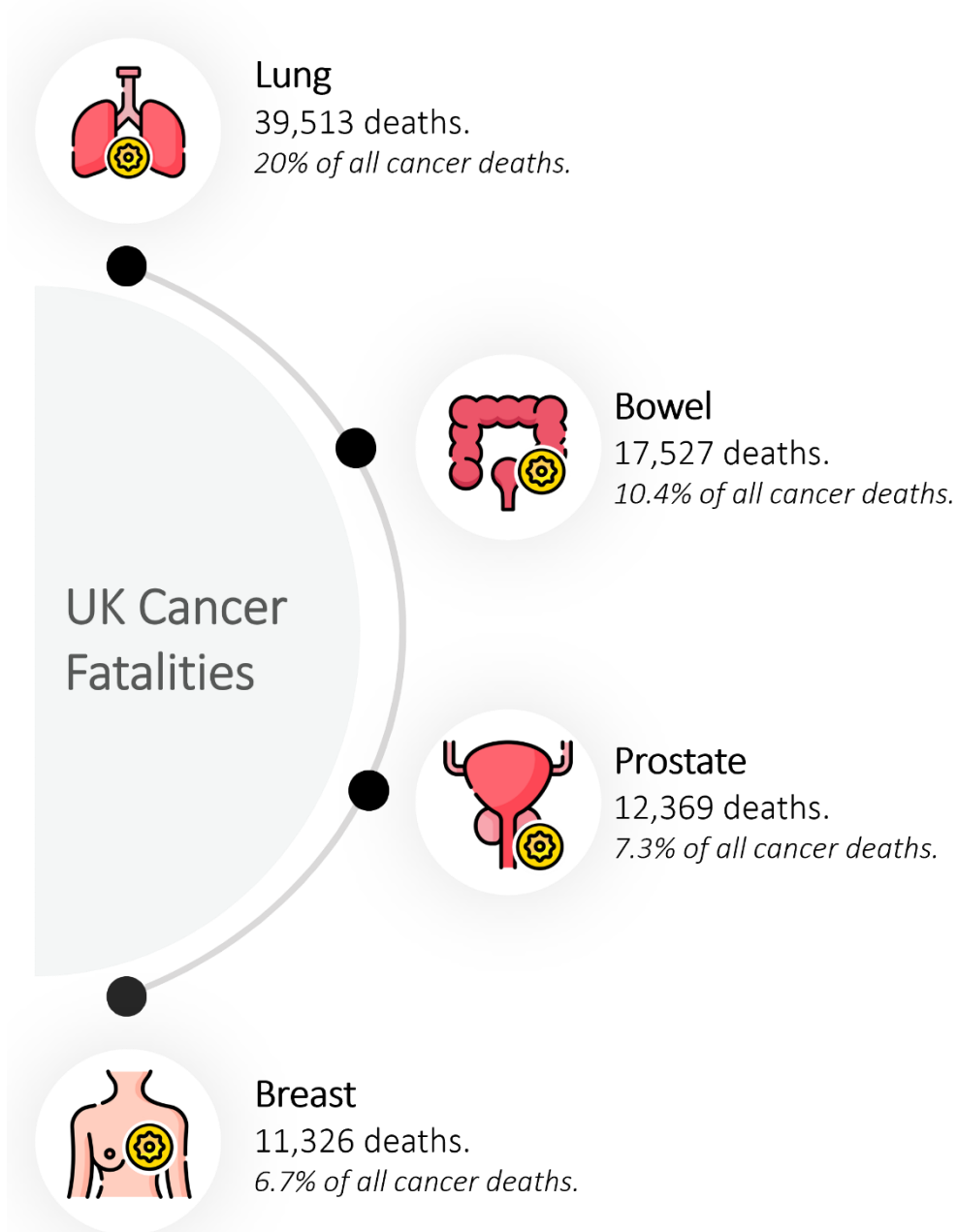
Learn more:

- Latest UK cancer prevalence estimates: [Macmillan](#)
- The [World Health Organization](#) (WHO) state that 30–50% of all cancer cases are preventable.

Why UK cancer numbers are increasing.

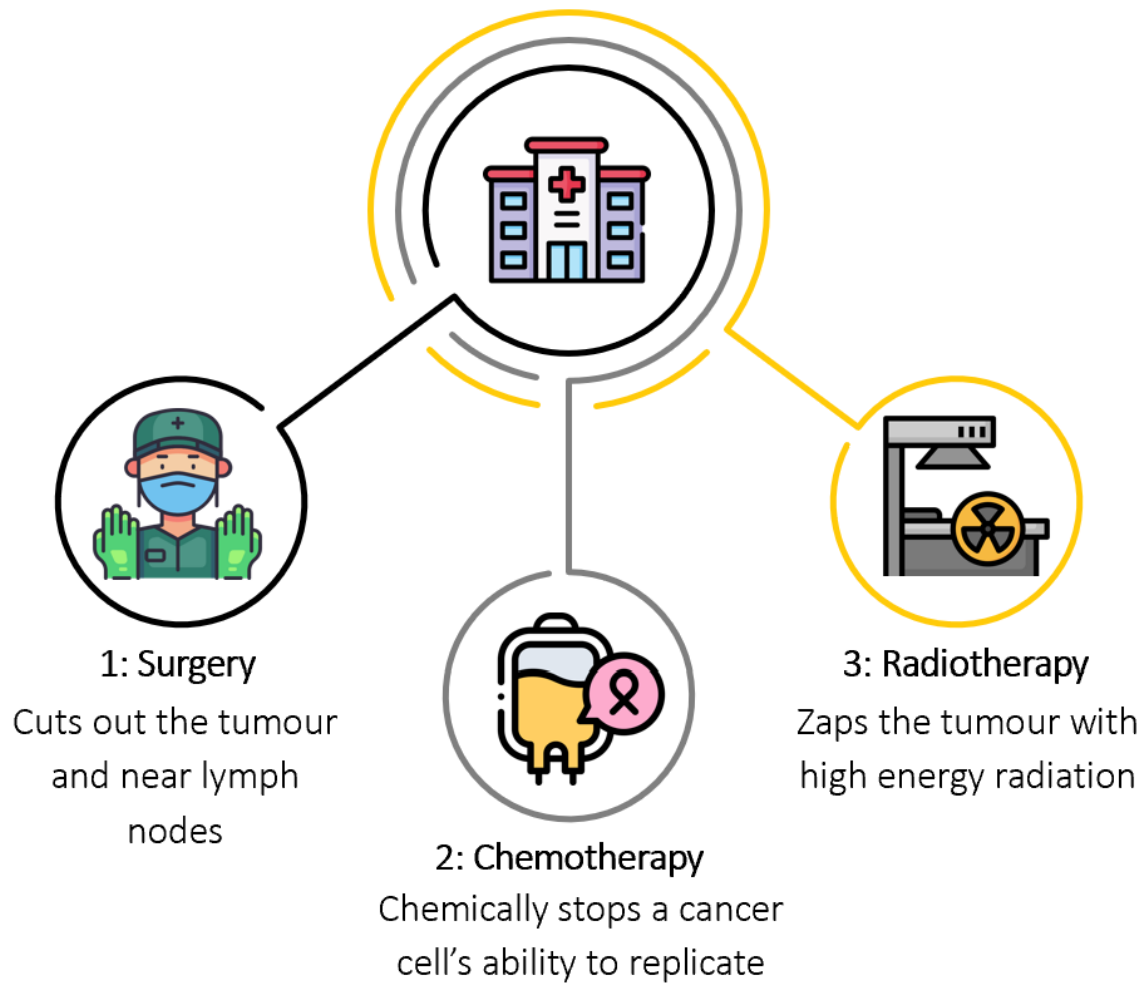


Top cancer fatalities



These four cancers account for nearly half of all cancer deaths in the UK. [Cancer Research UK](#) has tracked cancer mortality rates over the past 50 years, showing a 22% decline in death rates despite an increase in overall cases.

Top 3 UK Cancer Treatments



Surgery	Chemotherapy	Radiotherapy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 48% of all cancer patients ▪ 76% of those under 50 ▪ 23% of those over 50 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 28% of all cancer patients ▪ 49% of those under 50 ▪ 9% of those over 50 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 26% of all cancer patients ▪ 35% of those under 50 ▪ 14% of those over 50

Learn more:

- <https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/treatment>
- <https://www.macmillan.org.uk/cancer-information-and-support/treatment/types-of-treatment>

Cancer's 4 stages

Stage 1



Cells are programmed to grow, perform a job, and die. A cell becomes cancerous when it ignores its DNA programming rules. It grows, becomes abnormal, and invades nearby areas.

Stage 2



These abnormal cells replicate over and over and become a tumour. The tumour crowds out (bullies and kills) normal cells.

Stage 3



The tumour continues to grow. It reaches blood vessels and lymph nodes (*kind of a superhighway to other organs*)!

Stage 4



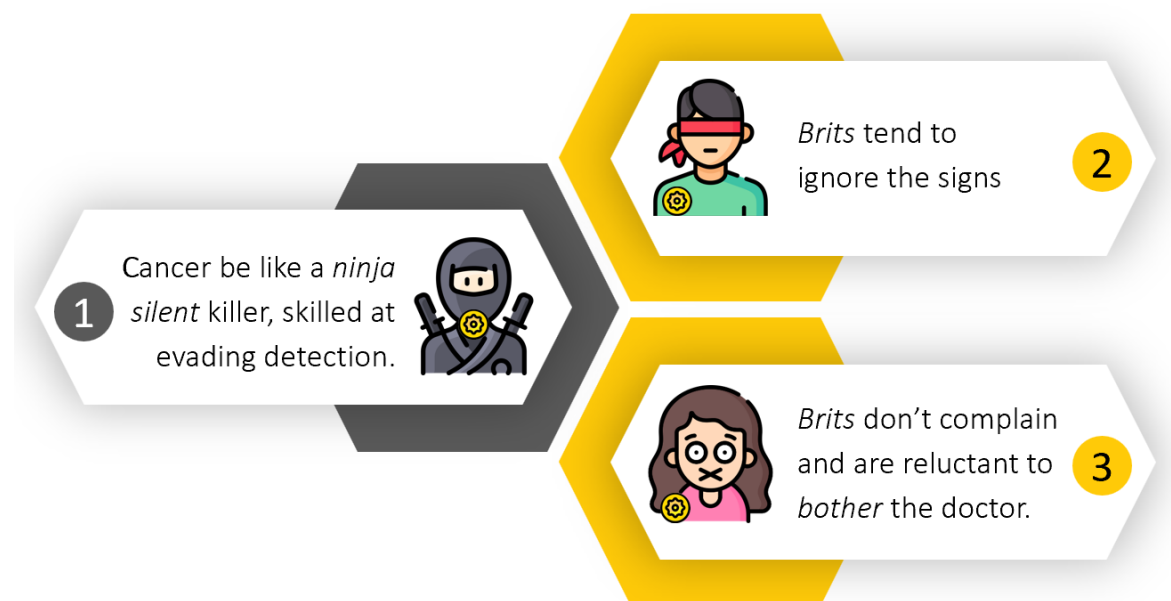
The cancer spreads to, and invades, other parts of your body. This primary cancer has now become a secondary cancer.

Learn more:

- <https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/what-is-cancer/stages-of-cancer>
- <https://www.macmillan.org.uk/cancer-information-and-support/diagnosis/staging-and-grading>

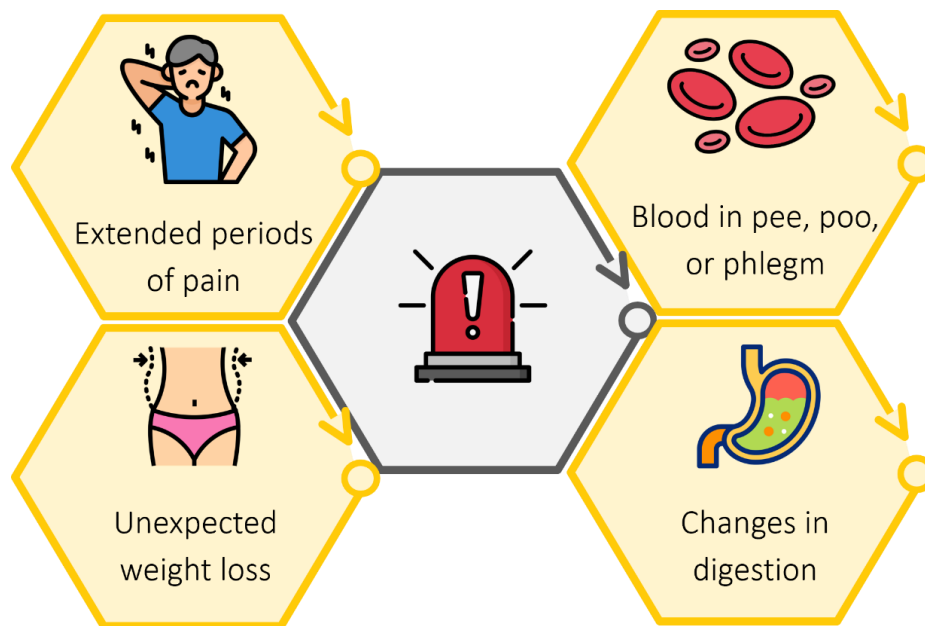
Cancer Detection

In the UK cancer detection can be problematic for 3 reasons. 1 reason is *medical* and the other 2 are *cultural* (British stiff upper lip)



Cancer is the UK public's biggest health concern. According to a 2024 [Cancer Research UK report](#), more people worry about cancer than any other medical condition, and most want to see earlier diagnosis and better treatment. A survey found that **70% of respondents** were most concerned about being diagnosed too late for effective treatment.

Typical cancer symptoms

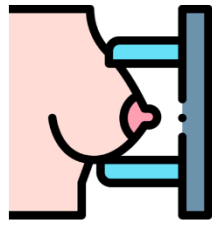


Cancer symptoms can vary depending on the cancer type and stage, but some warning signs to watch for include:

Don't be put-off or embarrassed to talk to your doctor about getting tested. Your doctor would rather tell you to *"take 2 aspirins and rest!"* rather than *"I wish you'd seen me sooner!"*

Be aware of "Silent Tumours".

Silent tumours **do not** produce *excessive* hormones, making them harder to detect. These cancers can remain dormant for years before showing signs. Examples include **pancreatic, liver, ovarian, cervical, and colon cancer**, which often present vague symptoms that may be mistaken for benign conditions. Here are some common screening methods in addition to blood testing:



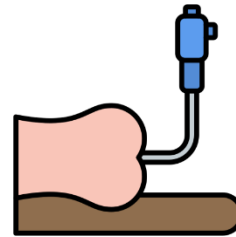
A **mammogram** is an X-ray of the breast to detect cancer, often before symptoms appear. It's a screening tool used especially for women over 50.



A **PSA test** (Prostate-Specific Antigen test) is a blood test used to check for prostate conditions, including **prostate cancer** and **enlarged prostate**.



A **CT scan** (computed tomography scan) is a medical imaging test that uses X-rays and a computer to create detailed pictures of the inside of your body.



A **colonoscopy** is a procedure used to examine the inside of the large intestine (colon) using a thin, flexible tube with a small camera.

Learn more:

- <https://www.cancerhub.uk/cancer-life>
- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/cancer/>
- <https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/cancer-symptoms>
- <https://www.bowelcanceruk.org.uk/about-bowel-cancer/symptoms/>
- <https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/diagnosis-staging/diagnosis>

Breast Cancer

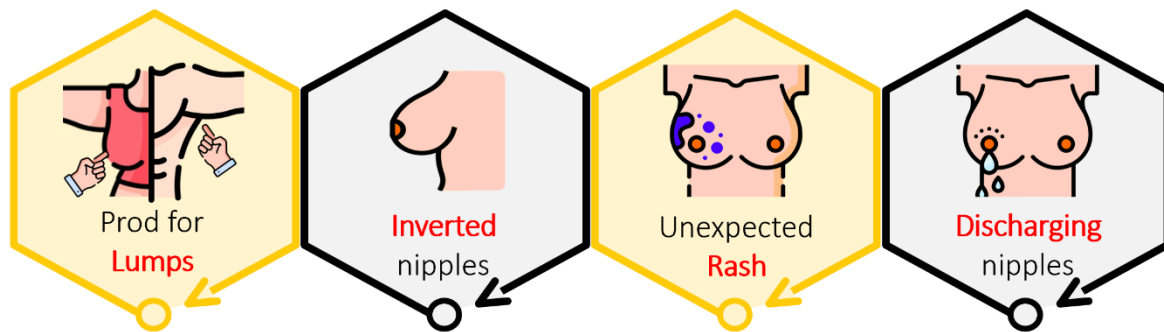
UK's #1 cancer



58,000+ new cases are diagnosed annually.
500+ men are *also* diagnosed with this cancer every year!

Breast cancer warning signs

Man or Woman- prod and poke your breasts and armpits to check for lumps and any of these breast cancer signs:



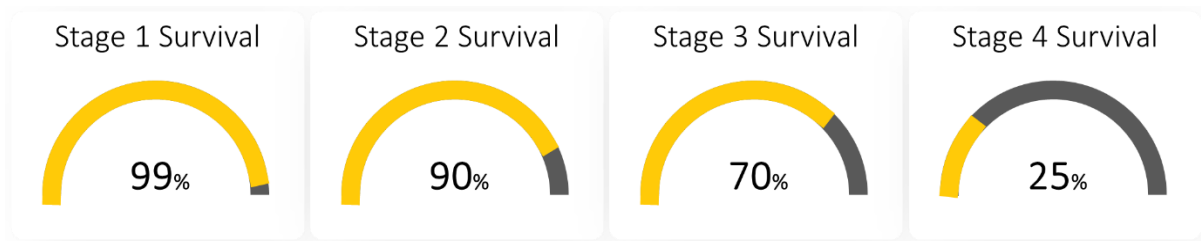
Secondary breast cancer

Secondary breast cancer is where a cancer that started in the breast spreads to other parts of the body, typically the liver, lungs, brain, or bones. Be aware that *when* breast cancer is first diagnosed it may *already have become a secondary cancer*. This type of cancer can't be cured, and treatments mostly focus on pain management.



Breast Cancer Now has revealed that **50% plus** of all UK women do NOT check their breasts regularly for signs of cancer! What's more, **11%** of women have reported NEVER having checked their breasts.

5-year breast cancer survival rates



Stage 1: The tumour is 2 cm or less and is still within the breast. Some cancer cells may have spread to lymph nodes in the armpit.

Stage 2: The tumour is between 2 and 5 cm and may have spread to 1 to 3 lymph nodes in the armpit.

Stage 3: The tumour cancer has spread to 9, or more, lymph nodes. It may have reached the chest wall or skin of the breast.

Stage 4: The cancer has spread to other parts of the body, such as the bones, liver, lungs, or brain.

Learn more:

- <https://www.cancerhub.uk/breast>
- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/breast-cancer-in-women/>
- <https://breastcancernow.org/>

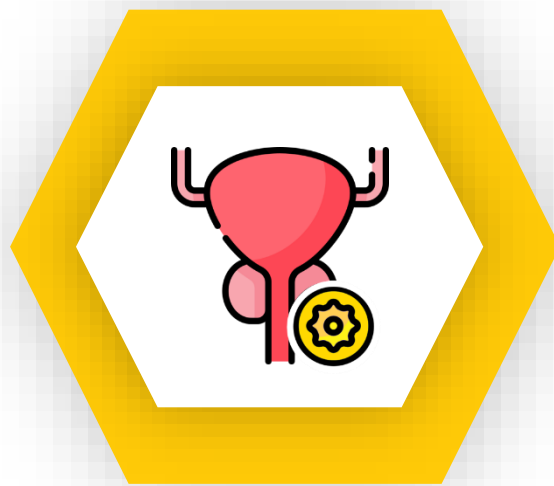
Breast Cancer Summary

Make a plan, set calendar reminders, to prod and poke your breast area on a regular basis. It *may* just save you a world of heartache and anguish. Here's what to look for:

- A lump or swelling in the breast, upper chest or armpit.
- Changes in the size or shape of the breast.
- A change in skin texture i.e. puckering or dimpling of the skin.
- A change in the colour of the breast- the breast may look red or inflamed.
- Rash, crusting or changes to the nipple.
- Any unusual discharge from a nipple.

Prostate Cancer

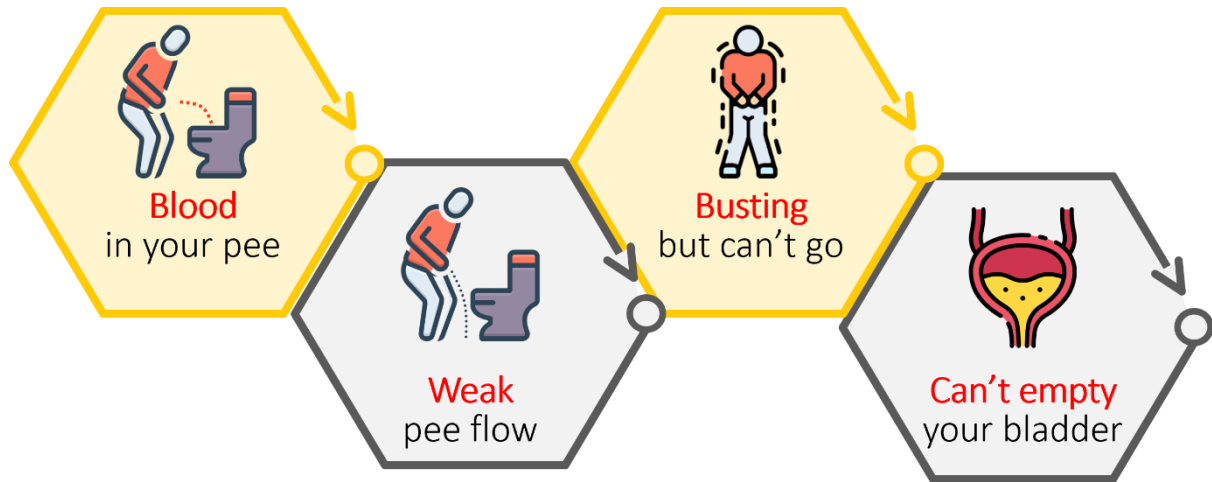
UK's #2 cancer



Every year over **52,000** men get this diagnosis.
12,000 lose their lives to it.

Prostate cancer warning signs

Prostate cancer is the most common cancer among men in the UK.

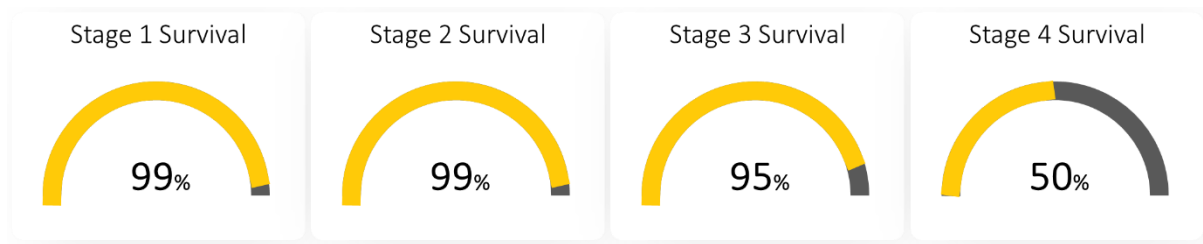


There are times when your GP will recommend a *rectal examination*. This involves feeling for an enlarged prostate by inserting a finger via your bum.

An additional test for prostate cancer is a blood test called the [prostate specific antigen](#) (PSA) blood test. PSA is a protein produced by both cancerous and noncancerous tissue in the prostate, a small gland that sits below the bladder in males. If the PSA level is higher than normal, then further investigating is warranted.

You may ask, *why have the rectal examine vs. the PSA test?* Because when GPs perform a rectal exam, they can *feel* if the prostate is enlarged. Best to just have it done to avoid later stage prostate cancer.

5-year prostate cancer survival rates



Stage 1: In early stage 1, the tumour is small and confined to one half of one of the prostate's lobes. In late stage 1, the tumour is still small but has spread to both prostate lobes.

Stage 2: The tumour is still confined within the prostate but is larger and has spread to nearby lymph nodes.

Stage 3: The tumour has now grown and spread outside the prostate and further into the lymph node system.

Stage 4: The (now metastatic) cancer has spread to other parts of the body, such as the bones, liver, lungs, or brain.

Learn more:

- <https://www.cancerhub.uk/prostate>
- <https://prostatecanceruk.org/>
- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/prostate-cancer/>
- <https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/prostate-cancer>

Prostate Cancer Summary

If you suffer from any of these symptoms go see your doctor and get checked sooner, not later:

- Difficulty or pain when going for pee.
- Having to rush to the toilet to pee.
- Lots of visits to the loo, especially at night.
- Starting and stopping while peeing.
- Dribbling pee.
- A feeling of not having emptied the bladder fully.
- Blood in your pee or semen.
- Back pain, pelvis pain, or hip pain.
- Difficulty getting or keeping a hard-on.

Bowel Cancer

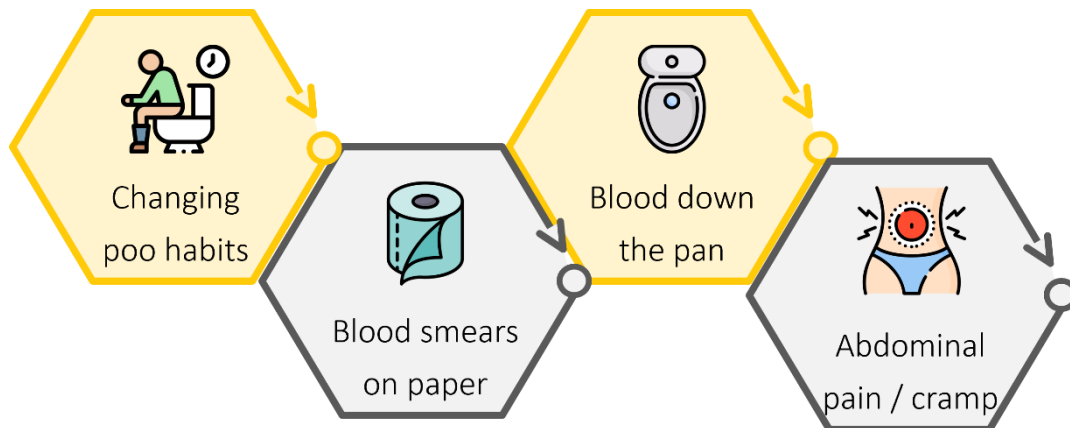
UK's #3 cancer



For the first time this century more people were diagnosed with bowel cancer (41,596) than lung cancer (39,635).

The UK's most embarrassing cancer!

Bowel cancer warning signs



If you have these, or similar, signs for 2+ weeks, call you GP!

The UK's 2nd most common cause of cancer death! It accounts for 10% of all cancer deaths. Bowel cancer is increasing in the younger generation...



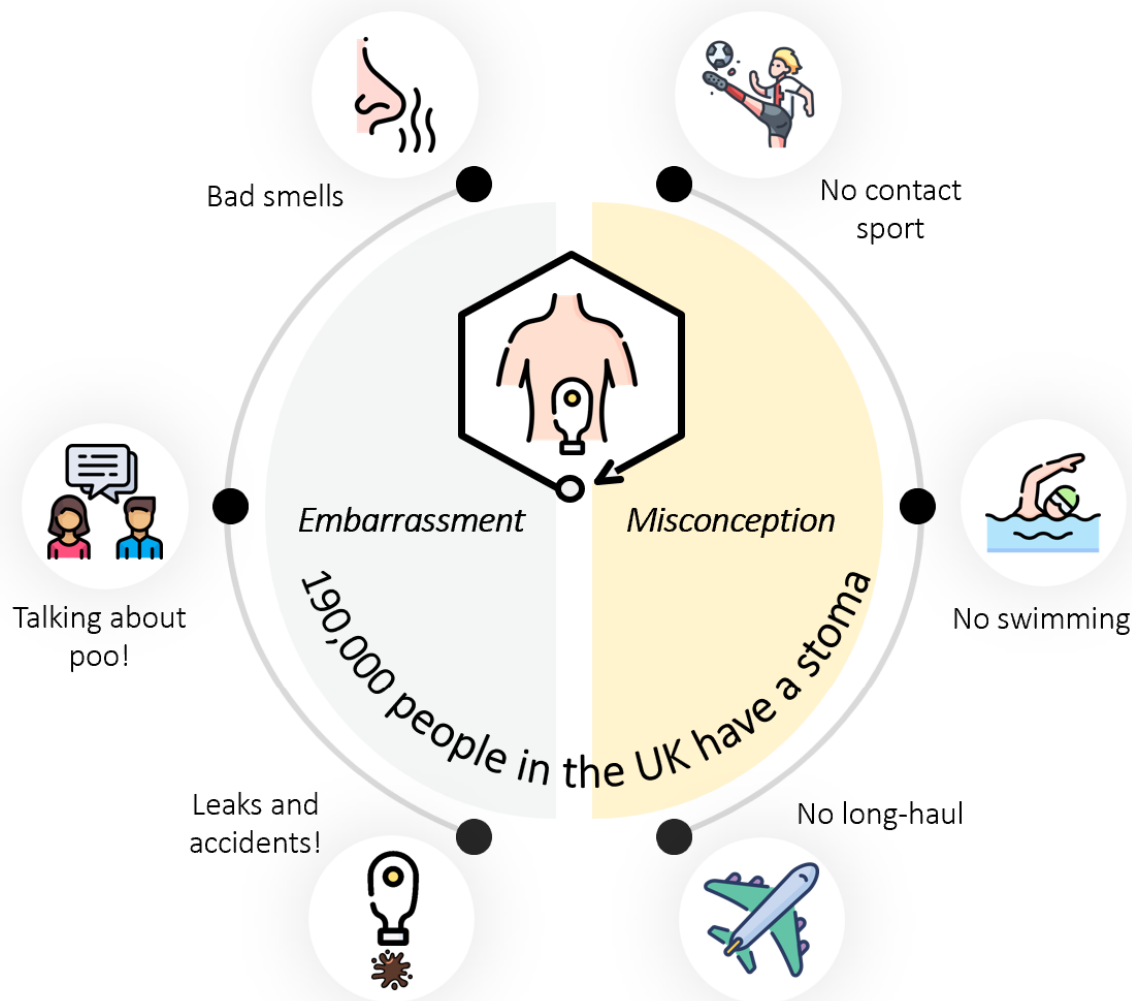
Bowel Cancer is **no longer** seen as an *over 50's* problem.



In 20 years, UK bowel cancer for those **25 to 49** has increased by **22%**.

According to [Bowel Cancer UK](#), **1 in 5** Brits avoid going to see their GP because they're embarrassed by their symptoms. This *results in* delays that could be avoided in diagnosing bowel cancer! Which means 58% of these cancers are *not caught* until stage 3 or 4. It doesn't help that 44% of these patients are **NOT** being treated on time!

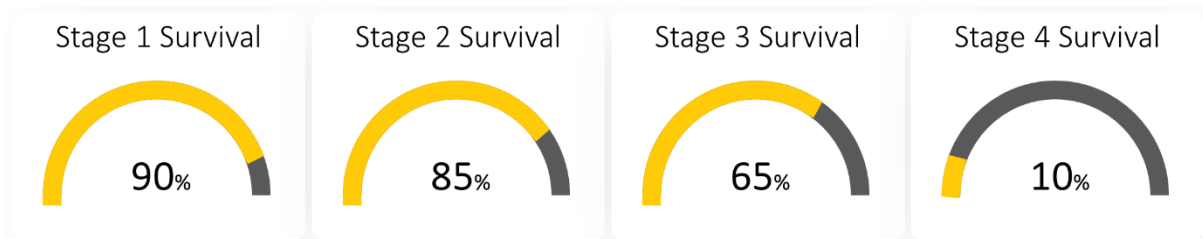
Dealing with embarrassment and misconceptions



With help, encouragement and support...
you will learn to manage these, and more!

With some adjustments...
your quality of life won't suffer?

5-year bowel cancer survival rates



Stage 1: The cancer has grown through the inner lining of the bowel but not into the muscle wall.

Stage 2: The cancer has grown into the outer wall of the bowel or into nearby tissues.

Stage 3: The cancer has spread to nearby lymph nodes but not reached distant body parts.

Stage 4: The cancer has spread to distant body parts, such as the liver or lungs.

Learn more:

- <https://www.cancerhub.uk/bowel>
- <https://www.bowelcanceruk.org.uk/>
- <https://bowelresearchuk.org/>
- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/bowel-cancer/>

Bowel Cancer Summary

A recent survey by the British health care group BUPA, found that 35% of Brits don't get bowel cancer symptoms checked because they're embarrassed. Make an urgent appointment to see your GP if you have:

- Changing poo habits (constipation, diarrhoea, straining, etc.).
- Blood in your poo.
- Blood smears / streaks / spots down the loo pan.
- Without wishing to sound gross, but you should also check the loo paper after you wipe because that may reveal blood stains that are not always visible down the pan.

Bleeding from your bum is often assumed to be from piles or haemorrhoids, while a change in stools may be put down to IBS (irritable bowel syndrome).

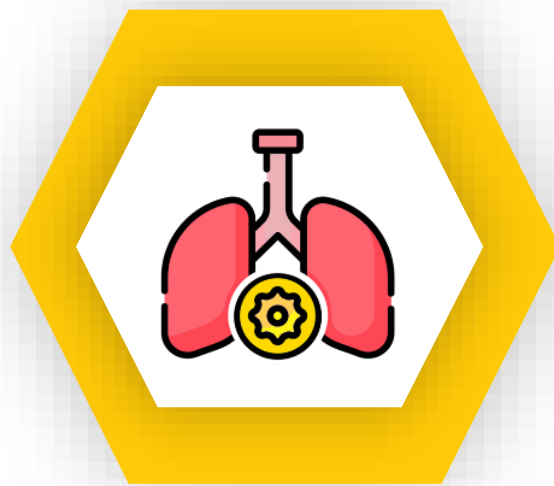
Don't make assumptions, don't be embarrassed...

Assumptions can kill; embarrassment can kill...

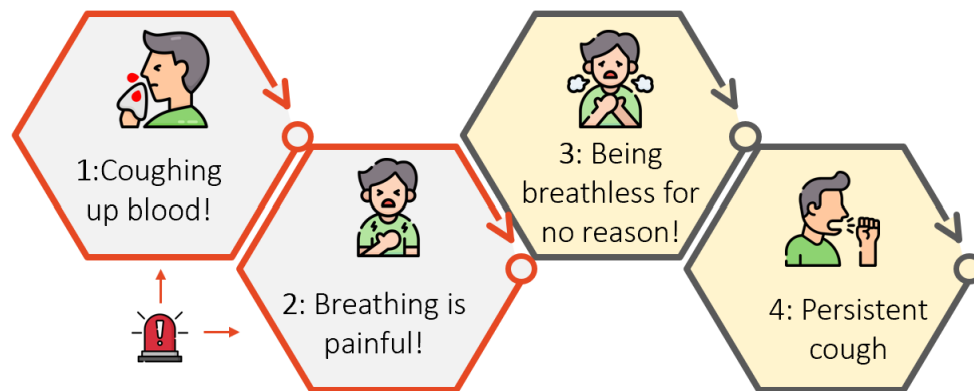
Get Tested!

Lung Cancer

UK's # 4 cancer



Lung cancer warning signs



1 and 2: Seek urgent medical advice.

3 and 4: If these conditions last for 2+ weeks, see your GP.

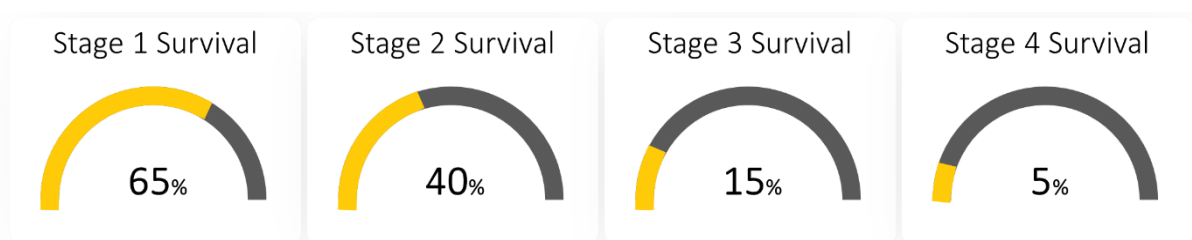
There are 39,000+ lung cancer deaths in the UK every year.

That's more than 100 deaths every day.

72% of lung cancer cases in the UK are caused by smoking.

Lung cancer is the leading cause of UK cancer deaths. It is responsible for around 21% of all cancer-related fatalities.

5-year lung cancer survival rates



Stage 1: The tumour can be plus or minus 3 cm but has not spread to any lymph nodes.

Stage 2A: The tumour is 4 cm or smaller and has spread to nearby lymph nodes on the same side of the chest.

Stage 2B: The tumour is larger than 4 cm but has not spread to any lymph nodes.

Stage 2C: The tumour is any size and has spread to lymph nodes on the opposite side of the chest.

Stage 3A: The cancer has spread to lymph nodes on the same side of the chest and may have grown into the main bronchus, the lining of the lung, or the heart lining.

Stage 3B: The cancer has spread to lymph nodes on the opposite side of the chest or to lymph nodes above the collarbone, and may have grown into the chest wall, diaphragm, or other structures in the chest.

Stage 3C: The cancer has spread to lymph nodes on both sides of the chest or to lymph nodes above the collarbone.

Stage 4: The cancer has spread to other parts of the body, such as the brain, liver, bones, or adrenal glands.

Learn more:

- <https://www.cancerhub.uk/lung>
- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/lung-cancer/>
- <https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/lung-cancer>
- <https://www.cancer.gov/types/lung>

Lung Cancer Summary

What makes lung cancer problematic and hard to detect is that there are rarely any early signs of the disease. See your GP sooner, not later if you are:

- Coughing up blood.
- Coughing all the time.
- Being breathless all the time (for no reason).
- In pain when breathing or coughing.

Depression

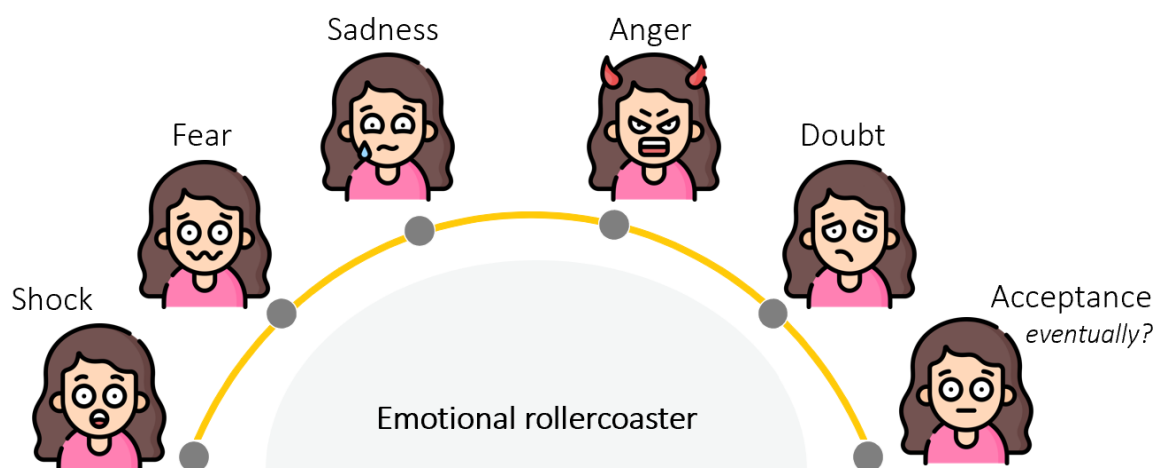


Medical definition

Depression is a *mental health condition* characterized by persistent low mood, loss of interest or pleasure in activities, and a range of emotional and physical symptoms. It can affect daily life, relationships, and overall well-being.

An emotional rollercoaster

When your oncologist looks you in the eye and says (the words no-one wants to hear) “*we found a tumour!*” you are going to be faced with a range of *feelings* and *emotions*....



For many, these *feelings* are not serial (one feeling doesn't always follow another). Many suffer multiple feelings at the same time. These feelings are common, both during and after cancer treatment. At times your brain may be so overloaded with negativity that it feels like it's on fire and will *implode*.

Psychological symptoms include:

- Irritability and intolerance of others
- Loss of interest or pleasure in activities

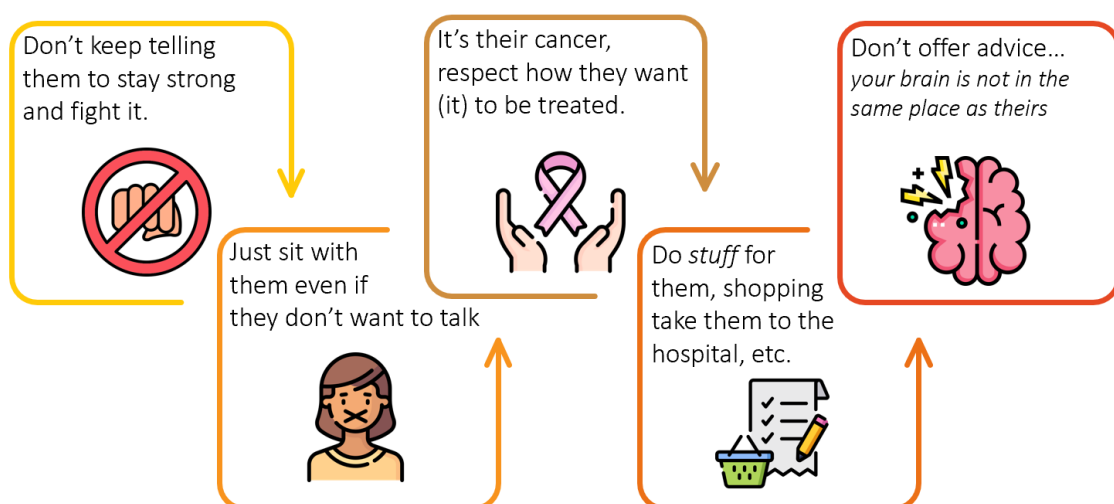
- Difficulty making decisions.
- Anxiety and excessive worry
- Suicidal thoughts or self-harm tendencies

If you're looking for more details, you can explore resources from [NHS](#), [WHO](#), or [Mind](#). Let me know if you'd like to discuss symptoms, treatments, or ways to support someone experiencing depression.

Strategies to help yourself.



Strategies to help a loved one.



Dealing with suicide

1 in 4 who have late-stage cancer consider suicide...

Cancer patients are at a significantly higher risk of *considering* suicide compared to the general population [1]. UK studies have shown that *late-stage* cancer patients have a **20% increased risk of suicide**, especially within the first six months of diagnosis [2]. This risk is even higher for cancers with poorer prognoses, such as pancreatic cancer and lung cancer. A study in the **US** reveals this number is **26% higher** [3] when compared with the general population.

Source:

[1] [Dying in Dignity](#)

[2] [Public Health: gov.uk](#)

[3] [Jama Network](#)



Sir Billy Conolly said:

"there are thousands of people in the local graveyard who would love to have your problem!"



Suicide is NOT the answer!

Learn more

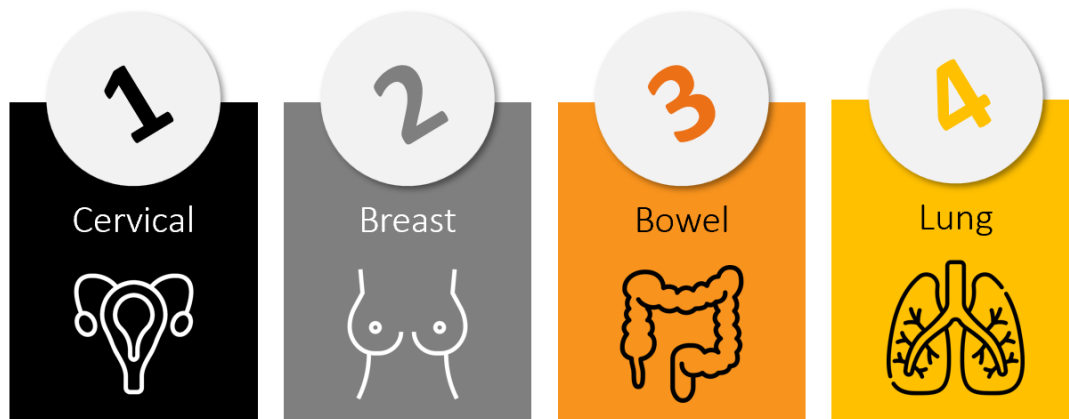
- [Cancer Research UK: Symptoms of Depression](#)
- [Macmillan: Depression and Cancer](#)
- [NHS Talking Therapies](#)

Appendix

NHS Screening Programs

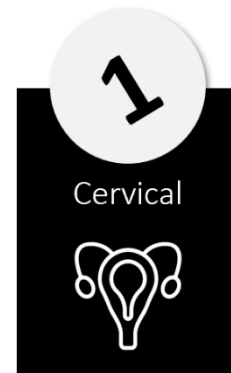


The UK's 4 *official* cancer screening programs



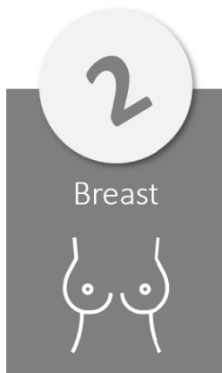
1: *Cervical cancer screening*

The [NHS cervical screening programme](#) in England is offered to people with a cervix aged from 25 to 64. Routine screening is offered every three years up to 49 years of age and every five years from 50 to 64 years of age. Depending on the result of the screen, people may be recalled earlier than these routine intervals.



As part of the NHS Cervical Screening Programme, all samples taken at cervical screening appointments are now being tested for high-risk Human Papillomavirus (HPV) in the first instance. This is the virus which causes nearly all cervical cancers. Samples that test positive for HPV will then go on to be further analysed with Liquid Based Cytology to detect cell abnormalities. The new test will identify more people at risk of cervical cancer earlier and could prevent around 600 additional cancers a year.

2: Breast cancer screening



About 1 in 7 women in the UK are diagnosed with breast cancer during their lifetime. If it's detected early, treatment is more successful and there's a good chance of recovery. Breast screening uses an X-ray test called a mammogram that can spot cancers when they're too small to see or feel.

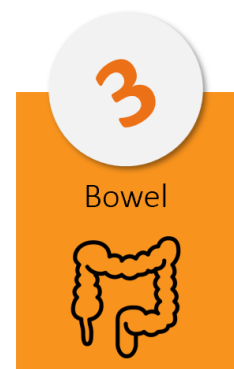
[Breast screening](#) is offered to women aged 50 to their 71st birthday in England. You'll first be invited for screening within three years of your 50th birthday. There is also currently a trial to examine the effectiveness of offering some women one extra screen between the ages of 47 and 49, and one between the ages of 71 and 73.

You may be eligible for breast screening before the age of 50 if you have a very high risk of developing breast cancer. If you are 71 or over, you will stop receiving screening invitations. You can still have screening once you are 71 or over if you want to and can arrange an appointment by contacting your local screening unit.

3: Bowel cancer screening

Bowel cancer survival is improving and has more than doubled in the last 40 years in the UK. If diagnosed early, more than 90% of bowel cancer cases can be treated successfully.

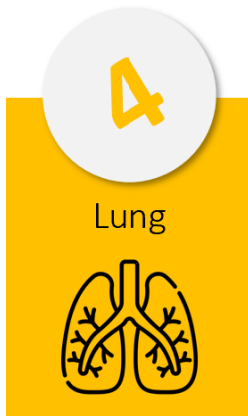
Screening programmes test to see if people show any early signs of cancer. By detecting bowel cancer at an early stage, treatment has a better chance of working.



The [NHS Bowel Cancer Screening Programme](#) is a vital initiative aimed at detecting bowel cancer early when treatment is more effective. It

offers screening to individuals aged **54 to 74** every two years, with plans to expand eligibility to those aged **50 and over**.

4 Lung cancer screening



If you're aged between 55 and 74 and have ever smoked, you may be offered an NHS lung health check ([lung cancer screening](#)).

Lung cancer causes more deaths than any other cancer in the UK. There are often no signs or symptoms of lung cancer at an early stage.

Lung cancer screening aims to find lung cancer early, sometimes before you have symptoms.

The lung health check looks at how well your lungs are working and can help diagnose lung cancer as early as possible. Early diagnosis can make lung cancer more treatable and make treatment more successful.

The Government has announced that the NHS will roll out targeted lung cancer screening across England. Currently, lung health checks are only available in some parts of England. They will be available everywhere by 2029.



End of
Book of Cancer