Cancer

Cancer information

**Cancer is a condition where cells in a specific part of the body grow and reproduce uncontrollably. The cancerous cells can invade and destroy surrounding healthy tissue, including organs.**

Cancer sometimes begins in one part of the body before spreading to other areas. This process is known as metastasis.

There are over 200 different types of cancer, each with its own methods of diagnosis and treatment.You can find out more about specific types of cancer by using the links on this page.

Spotting signs of cancer

Changes to your body's normal processes or symptoms that are out of the ordinary can sometimes be an early sign of cancer.

For example, a lump that suddenly appears on your body, unexplained bleeding or changes to your bowel habits are all symptoms that need to be checked by a doctor.

In many cases, your symptoms won't be related to cancer and will be caused by other, non-cancerous health conditions. However, it's still important for you to see your GP so that they can investigate your symptoms.

How common is cancer?

Cancer is a very common condition. In 2011, almost 331,500 people in the UK were diagnosed with cancer.

More than one in three people will develop some form of cancer during their lifetime.

In the UK, the four most common types of cancer are:

* [breast cancer](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Cancer-of-the-breast-female)
* [lung cancer](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/cancer-of-the-lung)
* [prostate cancer](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Cancer-of-the-prostate)
* [bowel cancer](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Cancer-of-the-colon-rectum-or-bowel)

In 2011, these types of cancer accounted for over half (53%) of all new cases.

Cancer treatment

Surgery is the primary treatment option for most types of cancer, because solid tumours can usually be surgically removed.

Two other commonly used treatment methods are [chemotherapy](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/chemotherapy/Pages/Definition.aspx) (powerful cancer-killing medication) and [radiotherapy](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/radiotherapy/Pages/Introduction.aspx) (the controlled use of high-energy [X-rays](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/X-ray/Pages/Introduction.aspx)).