

Why should I see my GP and what should I tell them?

It is important to remember that:

- You are not wasting anyone's time talking to them about possible signs or symptoms of cancer. You are going to the doctor to "rule out" anything serious.
- If it is cancer then the sooner you are diagnosed, the longer you are likely to live.
- If you feel that the conversation may be difficult, think about taking a friend or family member along with you. If the thought of it being cancer makes you nervous, then having the moral support of someone can really help you to talk and to listen to the doctor.
- You are the expert on your body. Your doctor needs as much information as possible (even if it seems irrelevant) to help diagnose the problem and help you access the right services.



Making an appointment with the doctor

- Make an appointment just to talk about your concerns. Do not try to use an existing health check appointment to slip in your worries.
- Receptionists are often managing busy appointment schedules. Tell the receptionist that you think it is urgent.
- Explain why and you should be able to get an appointment in the next few days, if not the same day.
- If going into the surgery to make an appointment, take the Speak Up information with you and show the receptionist what you are concerned about.
- Make sure you keep any appointment you make. If you have to cancel it, let the surgery know and make another one as soon as you can.

Before your appointment

- Write down details of your symptoms, including when they started and what makes them better or worse.
- Write down your most important questions.
- List or bring all your medicines and pills – including vitamins and supplements.
- Ask your hospital or surgery for an interpreter or communication support if needed.

- Make a note if any members of your family have been diagnosed with cancer.
- Ask a friend or family member to come with you, if you like.

During your appointment

- You can either talk your doctor through the notes you have made or let your friend or family member do it on your behalf. If you get nervous, hand over the notes and let your doctor read them.
- If you don't understand any words your doctor uses, ask for them to be written down and explained. "Can you say that again? I still don't understand."
- Write things down, or ask a family member or friend to take notes.
- Take the Speak Up information and show it to your GP. It can help you start the conversation without having to say much. "I am worried this could be a sign of cancer because..."
- You might like to record the visit on your phone – but ask the doctor first.

Before leaving

Check that:

- You've covered everything on your list.
- You understand, ask, for example, "Can I just check I understood what you said?"
- You know what should happen next – and when. Write it down.
- If you are not happy with the initial appointment or feel that your doctor did not take your symptoms seriously, contact the doctor again to try to make clearer anything you are confused or worried about.

If you are still not happy, you could:

- see another doctor within the same or different medical practice;
- Visit a local walk-in centre <http://www.brightonstationhealthcentre.nhs.uk/>

Go back to the doctor if:

- Your symptoms change, or something happens that makes you worried.
- Your symptoms fail to respond to either the medication/ treatment or in the timescale that your doctor suggested.