



Laurain Chapman, cancer survivor

Ovarian cancer: How you can raise awareness in your community

The NHS is running a campaign in the North West of England to raise awareness of ovarian cancer symptoms. We need volunteers, champions and groups to help reach local communities.

What is *Be Clear on Cancer*?

Be Clear on Cancer aims to get more cancers diagnosed at an early stage by raising awareness of key symptoms and encouraging people to discuss them with their doctor without delay. When cancer is picked up early, treatment is more likely to be successful.

Why focus on ovarian cancer?

Just over 5,900 women are diagnosed with ovarian cancer in England each year – only around three in ten women are diagnosed at the earliest stage.

Although you're twice as likely to survive cancer today compared to 40 years ago, there is still a lot of room for improvement. If the number of women who survived ovarian cancer in Britain was as good as the best countries in Europe, around 500 fewer women would die each year.

What is the campaign's key message?

Feeling bloated, most days, for three weeks or more could be a sign of ovarian cancer.

Who is it aimed at?

All women over 50, the age group most at risk of developing ovarian cancer, and their friends and family.

What activities will be taking place and when?

Adverts will appear on TV, radio and in the press from 10 February until 16 March 2014 across the North West television region. There will also be events in public places, like shopping centres.

How can you help women in your community?

You have a vital role to play. We know that people often listen to advice from friends and family, and others they trust, when deciding if symptoms are serious enough to see their doctor. People put off going to see their doctor because they:

- don't realise their symptoms are serious
- worry about wasting the doctor's time
- might be embarrassed

By talking face-to-face, you can help women overcome any concerns they have and understand that it's important to get symptoms checked out. You can also encourage them to visit their doctor.

Reassure women that they're not wasting anyone's time by getting any symptoms checked out and, if it's not serious, their mind will be put at rest. Chances are it's nothing to worry about, but it could be something that needs treatment.

Three things you can do

1 Promote the campaign

2 Make it part of your day-to-day conversations

3 Encourage women to see their doctor

Key facts about ovarian cancer

- **More than eight in ten women diagnosed with ovarian cancer in England each year are aged 50 and over**
- **Around 3,400 women aged 50 and over die from ovarian cancer in England every year**
- **More than 90% of women diagnosed with the earliest stage ovarian cancer (stage 1) survive for at least five years. This figure is 5% for women diagnosed with the most advanced stage disease (stage 4)**

'Often, women I meet talk about not wanting to bother their GP. But they might confide in me, as another woman, about symptoms like feeling bloated. I think this campaign is great. Now I know that if someone mentions that they're feeling bloated most days, I can ask if they've seen the campaign TV ad, and suggest they get checked out by their GP.'

Jacqueline Troughton from Preston

You don't need to give medical advice to help your community

- Avoid asking questions about the symptoms someone might have. Just explain it's best to get them checked out by their doctor. It might not be anything serious, but if it is, finding out sooner can make a real difference.
- Reassure them that the doctor or nurse wants to hear about their concerns. They're not wasting anyone's time and there's no need to feel embarrassed.
- Some women might welcome support to make an appointment. If it's appropriate, you could suggest that they take someone with them once it's booked.
- Help women feel more confident about speaking to their doctor by suggesting they underline the symptoms they have been experiencing on the [*Be Clear on Cancer*](#) leaflet and encourage them to take it with them to their doctor. They may find it useful to make a note of how often the symptoms have occurred and how they feel, so they can clearly explain why they are worried.
- If someone has seen their doctor already, but their symptoms haven't gone away, have changed, or got worse, reassure them that their doctor will want to know. Explain that it's important they go back and see their doctor again.
- Ask them to come and tell you how they got on. This opens the door for you to give them another nudge if they haven't been to get themselves checked out by the next time you see them.

'After an energetic holiday, I began to feel extremely uncomfortable with a bloated stomach. I'd also lost my appetite. My doctor referred me to the hospital where I was diagnosed with ovarian cancer. Six years on, I still lead an active life.'

Laurain Chapman, aged 63, cancer survivor and supporter of Ovacome

Talking about cancer can be difficult. Do you have any tips?

'You don't have to have the answers, talking about it is the most important part,' says a Cancer Research UK nurse. 'Listen and ask questions such as, "What is it that is worrying you?" This allows people to come up with their own answers.'

'Find phrases that you are comfortable with and practise using them. Start by talking about the campaign and asking people if they saw it advertised locally. If they mention a symptom that they're worried about, you could ask them: "Do you think it might be a good idea to discuss your symptoms with your doctor?"'

Three things you can do

1 Promote the campaign. Put up posters in your local area and have leaflets handy to give out and help you explain the ovarian cancer campaign. You can order free posters and leaflets from orderline.dh.gov.uk or by ringing 0300 123 1002.

2 Make it part of your day-to-day conversations. Talking may prompt someone to go and see their doctor. Or they might open up about a symptom they've been hiding. You'll be helping to make cancer less of a taboo topic.

3 Encourage women to see their doctor. We know that often people just need a nudge from family, friends or those around them to persuade them to go to their doctor if they're worried about possible symptoms. Or they might need some encouragement to visit their doctor when deciding if their symptoms are serious enough.

Find out more

- **Direct members of the public to the NHS Choices website to find out more about the campaign:** www.nhs.uk/persistentbloating
- **If you work for a voluntary sector organisation, for more information about the campaign and additional materials, visit:** www.naedi.org/beclearoncancer/ovarian