



Margaret, aged 76,
breast cancer survivor

Spread the word: Older women are at greater risk of breast cancer

Be Clear on Cancer 13 July – 6 September 2015

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Public Health England's national advertising campaign aims to raise awareness of the symptoms of breast cancer amongst women aged over 70. We need your help to spread the word to people you know or speak to in your community.

What is Be Clear on Cancer?

Be Clear on Cancer aims to improve early diagnosis of cancer by raising awareness of symptoms and encouraging people to see their doctor without delay. Finding cancer earlier makes it more treatable.

What is the main message of the campaign?

1 in 3 women who get breast cancer are over 70. We don't want to scare women, but they may not know that their risk of getting breast cancer increases as they get older. The TV advert explains that finding breast cancer early makes it more treatable.

The campaign materials, such as the leaflet and posters, explain that: 'A lump isn't the only sign of breast cancer' and that women should tell their doctor if they notice any unusual or persistent changes to their breasts.

Where will activities take place and when?

Advertising will run from 13 July to 6 September 2015. The adverts will appear on the TV, in newspapers and in women's magazines. Due to the increasing number of older women using the internet, there will also be advertising online, on websites such as Facebook.

Why focus on breast cancer in women over 70?

Older women are more likely to be diagnosed with breast cancer and have a greater chance of dying from the disease than younger women. Research shows that older women are also more likely to put off or avoid seeing their GP about breast cancer symptoms. Finding breast cancer early increases the chances of successful treatment. We need to make sure that older women are aware of the symptoms of breast cancer, and if they notice any unusual changes to their breasts that they tell their GP.

What symptoms should women look out for?

The campaign leaflet highlights the following symptoms of breast cancer:

- A lump or thickening in your breast or armpit
- Changes to the skin of your breast
- Changes in the shape or size of your breast
- Nipple changes
- Nipple discharge
- Pain in your breast
- Any other unusual or persistent changes to your breasts.

How can women reduce their risk of developing breast cancer?

No matter what their age, healthy lifestyle changes really help to reduce a woman's chances of getting breast cancer. The leaflet for the campaign highlights that women can reduce their risk by:

- maintaining a healthy weight
- cutting down on alcohol
- staying physically active.

"One of my nipples and the skin underneath had changed, so I made an appointment to see my doctor straight away. I didn't realise that the older you are, the more likely you are to get breast cancer. Thanks to treatment, my tumour was successfully removed."

Margaret, breast cancer survivor

Key facts about breast cancer:

- **Around 41,200 women in England are diagnosed with breast cancer each year – of which around 13,400 (a third) are aged 70 and over^a**
- **In England, approximately 5,400 women aged 70 and over die from breast cancer each year^b. This equates to around 15 women per day**

How can you help to spread the word?

We all have an important part to play in making this campaign a success. Are you a volunteer, a cancer champion, part of a community group, or caring for or supporting an elderly friend, neighbour or relative? Help women over 70 to be breast aware by promoting the signs and symptoms of breast cancer. Many women, particularly older women, are not aware that possible signs of breast cancer include things like changes to the skin or nipple.

People often take advice from friends, family and others they trust when they're deciding if their symptoms are serious enough to see the doctor. Women may be embarrassed or worry about wasting their GP's time. By talking about the campaign with women in your community, or an elderly relative or friend that you care for, you can help older women to overcome their concerns. Encourage them to tell their doctor if they notice any unusual changes in their breasts.

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

A Cancer Research UK nurse, who specialises in communicating about cancer, advises: 'It's important to feel confident and to try to make cancer a normal part of conversation. You could start by asking someone if they've seen the Be Clear on Cancer TV advert, and what they remember about it. But if you are concerned about somebody or they mention a symptom that they're worried about, why not ask them – "Do you think it might be a good idea to discuss your symptoms with your doctor?"'

Other hints and tips when talking about cancer:

- It's often better not to ask too many questions about the symptoms someone might have. Simply explain that it's important to get them checked out by a doctor.
- Reassure women that the chances are their symptoms are not serious. But if it is cancer, finding out sooner can make a real difference.
- Help women to feel more confident about speaking to their doctor. Suggest 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 GP.
- You could also encourage women to let you know how they get 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.

- Women aged over 70 are not routinely invited for breast screening but are entitled to self-refer every three years if they wish. They just need to get in touch with their local breast screening unit to make an appointment. Some women may appreciate support in booking an appointment, so it may be useful to make a note of the contact details for your local screening unit. A leaflet is available to give women information about the possible benefits and risks of breast screening to help them decide whether or not to make an appointment.

Three things you can do:

1 Promote the campaign. Display posters and hand out campaign leaflets within your local area. Tell people to visit nhs.uk/breastcancer70 if they would like more information or to download the leaflet.

2 Make it part of your day-to-day conversations. Talking might prompt someone to make an appointment or open up to you about a change in their breasts they've been worrying about, or didn't think was serious. You'll be helping to reduce the fear around cancer by talking about it and reminding people that if it is diagnosed early, it could make a real difference.

3 Encourage people to visit their GP. Reassure women that their doctor will want to know if they notice any unusual changes to their breasts and that there's no need to feel embarrassed. Some women may need help to book an appointment at the GP surgery. Can you help them or put them in contact with someone who can? If someone is worried about visiting their GP, suggest they take someone with them to their appointment. If appropriate, you could offer to accompany a friend or relative to give them some moral support.

Useful resources and tools:

- **Order free posters and leaflets:** Visit the [Health and Social Care Publications Orderline](https://www.healthandsocialcarepublications.org.uk) or call 0300 123 1002
- **View the advert:** Visit nhs.uk/breastcancer70
- **Alternative formats:** The leaflet is also available in alternative formats, including easy read, and can be downloaded from nhs.uk/breastcancer70 or ordered from enquiries@phe.gov.uk
- **Change4Life:** Use 'Change4Life' to deliver healthy lifestyle messages
- **Information and advice about cancer:** Visit the Cancer Research UK website or call Cancer Research UK's specialist nurses on freephone 0808 800 4040

^a Incidence data supplied by West Midlands Knowledge & Intelligence Team (KIT) based on National Cancer Registration Service (NCRS) data. Based on ICD-10:C50.

^b Deaths data supplied by West Midlands KIT based on Office for National Statistics data. Based on ICD-10:C50.