



Margaret, aged 76,
breast cancer survivor

Breast cancer in women over 70: Information for local authority teams

13 July – 6 September 2015

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Public Health England's national campaign is aimed at raising awareness of breast cancer in women aged 70 and over. By making women in your local area aware of the activity, community teams can make a vital difference.

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.

Has the 'breast cancer in women over 70' campaign been run before?

The campaign was successfully piloted in 2012 and 2013. It went national, across England, for the first time in February 2014.

What is the main message of the campaign?

The key message promoted on TV and in other campaign materials will be: '1 in 3 women who get breast cancer are over 70, so don't assume you're past it'. The advert also reinforces the message that finding cancer early makes it more treatable.

What symptoms should women look out for?

Awareness that a lump may be a possible sign of breast cancer is relatively high, with estimates that around 85% of older ladies identify it as a breast cancer symptom. Awareness of other symptoms is much lower. The campaign leaflet for the public 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.

What if women have questions about reducing their risk of breast cancer?

The campaign leaflet also provides information about how women can reduce their chances of developing cancer.

What can you do to support the campaign?

You are best placed to know how to spread the campaign messages in your community. You don't need to be medically trained or to give any clinical advice – we need you to help us ensure that women over 70 are breast aware and know what to do if they have a symptom. Here are some suggestions on how you can support the campaign:

- During the campaign, work with your public health leads, Health and Wellbeing Boards, and Clinical Commissioning Groups to identify which frontline teams are in regular contact with women aged over 70. Make sure they are aware of the campaign, that they are mindful that women in your community may have questions about breast cancer and that they are able to signpost women to clinical support when appropriate
- Brief elected members so that they can talk knowledgeably about the campaign at health-related events, or more generally
- Activate local groups and organisations that work in your community to engage with older people or promote healthier lifestyles (such as leisure). They are well-placed to raise awareness of the campaign and integrate it into their existing work and promotions
- Volunteers, community champions, and carers working with older women in care homes or in the community can help by highlighting the campaign as part of their everyday conversations with the public
- Promote the campaign by displaying posters in offices and buildings, and encouraging staff to talk to colleagues about the campaign. Integrate promotion of the campaign into any local events that may be running.

Key facts about breast cancer:

- **An average of 65 cases of breast cancer in women aged 70 and over are diagnosed in each Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) per year. This equates to around five cases of breast cancer in women aged 70 and over in each CCG per month^a**
- **Around 5,400 women aged 70 and over die from breast cancer in England every year^b. This equates to around 15 women per day**

What activities will be taking place and when?

Advertising will run from 13 July to 6 September 2015. The adverts will appear on the TV, in print media including magazines for women and 'out of home' (for example on pharmacy bags and GP TV). Due to the increasing number of older ladies using the internet, advertising will also be featured in key online channels, such as Facebook.

What materials are available to help promote the campaign?

You can order campaign leaflets and posters free of charge through the [Health and Social Care Publications Orderline](#) or by calling 0300 123 1002.

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

Other briefing sheets are also available, including one for [community groups and volunteers](#).

How does this campaign support local priorities?

Cancer is included in many Joint Strategic Needs Assessments, often as part of reducing health inequalities or gaps in life expectancy. Breast cancer [survival](#) is lower in older women – more than half of women who die from breast cancer in England each year are over 70. If breast cancer is diagnosed at the earliest stage in women aged 70 and over, one-year relative survival is as high as 99%. At a late stage, it drops to just 53%.^c

Older women are more likely to [delay](#) seeing their GP about breast cancer symptoms and have a greater chance of being diagnosed at a [later stage](#), when the disease is less treatable. Finding breast cancer early increases the chances of successful treatment and survival.

Can women still have NHS breast screening?

Women over the age of 70 are entitled to self-refer for breast screening every three years if they wish and just need to make their own [appointment](#). Some women in England aged 71–73 are being invited for breast screening as part of a major research trial, but the results of the trial will not be known until the early 2020s.

This campaign focuses on symptomatic breast cancer and how older women are at greater risk. However, screening is mentioned in the [campaign leaflet](#), which will be distributed to key locations such as GP surgeries.

Can we really make a difference?

We need to encourage people to talk more openly about cancer and remind them that finding it earlier means the greater the chances are of successful treatment and survival. People are often unaware of how important it is to get their symptoms checked out.

Older ladies may not want to cause a fuss, may dismiss their symptom as a sign of ageing, or worry about wasting their GP's time. However, we believe that raising awareness can make a real difference.

The first national breast cancer campaign for women over 70, which ran in early 2014, has showed some promising results. When looking at all routes to diagnosis (including urgent GP referrals and breast screening), the total number of women aged 70 and over diagnosed with breast cancer increased by 31%^d (comparing March–May 2012^e with March–May 2014).

Find out more:

- **Order free posters and leaflets:** Visit [Health and Social Care Publications Orderline](#) or call 0300 123 1002
- **View the TV advert:** 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
- **For more briefings:** Visit naedi.org/beclearoncancer
- **Campaign website:** nhs.uk/breastcancer70



- 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.
- c NCRS data, analysed by West Midlands KIT and Public Health England.
- d The result is statistically significant
- e Local pilots ran Jan–March 2012. The regional pilot ran Jan–March 2013, therefore 2012 was used as a base year for the referral data