

...about how seeing
your doctor early could
save your life



“I’m very glad I went to the doctor straight away.”

I first started having difficulty swallowing my food in August 2009, when I choked on a piece of sausage at the care home where I worked. My friend said I should go to the doctor, which I did. When I told him my symptoms, he sent me for tests at the local hospital. I was diagnosed with cancer of the oesophagus, which I’d never heard of before. But I had an operation in January 2010, and chemotherapy, and by May that year my treatment had finished. I’m very glad I went to the doctor straight away. I can still do most of the things I did before, including playing with my young grandchildren.

Denise Tapson, aged 60

...about how to reduce
your chances of getting
these cancers

Stop smoking

It’s never too late to quit. No matter what age you stop smoking, it reduces your chances of developing cancer of the stomach or oesophagus and makes a real difference to your health in general. There’s plenty of support and help available from the NHS. Visit smokefree.nhs.uk or call **0800 169 0169**.

Look after yourself

If you’re overweight, you can lose weight by combining a calorie-controlled diet with regular exercise. Swimming, cycling, dancing – the more you can do, the better. Even walking to your local shops instead of taking the car can make a difference.

Eat healthily

Try to get your 5-a-day. So eat more vegetables and fruit, fish and wholegrain foods. Eat less fattening foods like cakes and pastries and fewer processed meats like bacon and ham.

Cut back on drinking alcohol

Drinking too much alcohol can lead to a number of health problems and is linked with cancer of the oesophagus. By drinking less, you’ll reduce your health risks.

Unclear on anything?
Visit nhs.uk/ogcancer

© Crown copyright Department of Health 2012

NHS



Dr Jane Scott

**Difficulty swallowing
food? Indigestion
or heartburn for
3 weeks?
Tell your doctor.**

**BE CLEAR
ON CANCER**



Dr Terry Bowley

...about cancer of the stomach and oesophagus

There are almost 13,000 new cases of these two cancers in England every year. Together, they cause over 10,000 deaths annually. Both cancers affect men and women, but are more common in men. More than nine out of 10 people who get cancer of the stomach or oesophagus are over 55.

This leaflet explains the signs of these two types of cancer. If you notice any of the symptoms, tell your doctor straight away. It might not be anything serious, but if it is cancer, then finding it early makes it more treatable.

...about the medical terms

The oesophagus is the long tube (gullet) that carries food from the throat to the stomach. Cancer of the oesophagus is also called 'oesophageal cancer'. Sometimes oesophageal and stomach cancers are known as 'oesophago-gastric cancer'. 'Oesophago-gastric cancer' means cancer of either the oesophagus or the stomach.

...about how to spot it

See your doctor straight away if:

- food ever feels like it's sticking in your throat when you swallow, or
- you've had heartburn or indigestion on and off for 3 weeks or more

Looking out for cancer of the oesophagus

If you ever feel that food gets stuck in your throat when eating, this could be a sign of oesophageal cancer, especially if you're over 55. There may be another reason why you're having difficulty swallowing food, but it's always best to get this checked out, as soon as you can. Finding cancer early makes it more treatable.

Other symptoms of oesophageal cancer include:

- losing weight for no obvious reason
- throat pain
- a persistent cough

Looking out for stomach cancer

You should also tell your doctor if you've been suffering from heartburn or indigestion on and off for three weeks or longer. This could be a sign of stomach cancer, particularly if you're over 55. The chances are it's nothing serious, but an early diagnosis improves the chances of successful treatment. Even if you're taking medicine and it seems to help, you still need to see your doctor if you have heartburn or indigestion most days.

Other symptoms of stomach cancer include:

- trapped wind and frequent burping
- feeling full very quickly when eating
- feeling bloated after eating
- nausea or vomiting

...about how important it is to see your doctor

You're not wasting anyone's time by getting your symptoms checked out, so make that trip to your doctor's surgery. If it's nothing to worry about, your mind will be put at rest. But if it is cancer of the stomach or oesophagus, early detection makes it easier to treat. Seeing your doctor without delay may save your life.

Having symptoms doesn't mean it's cancer

Perhaps it's a sign of another condition, which may need treating? Find out for sure by visiting your surgery.

If you know anyone who has any of the symptoms described in this leaflet, tell them they should see their doctor.

You can find your doctor's contact details online at [nhs.uk/ogcancer](https://www.nhs.uk/ogcancer)