



Ann Long, lung cancer survivor

Lung cancer 'reminder' campaign: How you can raise awareness in your community

A national campaign will be raising awareness of the symptoms of lung cancer again this summer. We need your support to reach local communities.

What is Be Clear on Cancer?

Be Clear on Cancer campaigns aim to get more cancers diagnosed at an early stage by raising awareness of key symptoms and encouraging people to discuss them with their doctor earlier. When cancer is picked up early, treatment is more likely to be successful.

What is the main message of this campaign? If you've been coughing for three weeks, tell your doctor.

What activities will be taking place and when?

The first national campaign in May–June 2012 increased the public's awareness of a persistent cough as a symptom of lung cancer, but we want to keep the main campaign messages at the front of people's minds. A 'reminder' campaign will run on TV, radio and in the press from 2 July until mid-August 2013. There will also be face-to-face events in public places, such as shopping centres.

Who is the campaign aimed at?

Lung cancer is more common as people get older – 97% of those diagnosed in England are over 50, so the campaign is aimed at men and women in this age group. It is also aimed at friends and family who can pass on information and encourage loved ones to make an appointment with their doctor if they're worried.

Why does this campaign focus on lung cancer?

Lung cancer is England's biggest cancer killer. It has one of the lowest survival rates of any cancer because over two-thirds of patients are diagnosed at a late stage when treatment that could cure it is not possible. More lives could be saved if people were diagnosed at an earlier stage.

Why is there no mention of smoking in the advertising?

Smoking causes more than 8 in 10 lung cancers in the UK. But we know that including a smoking-related message can put people off – smokers may feel that they're being nagged, and non- or ex-smokers might not see it as relevant to them.

How can you help people in your community?

You have a vital role to play. People can put off getting symptoms checked out for lots of different reasons. But we know that people often take notice of advice from friends, family, and people they trust when deciding if symptoms are serious enough to see their doctor. They might worry about wasting the doctor's time. Or, if they think it could be cancer, people are often frightened of finding out or are scared of treatment.

You know your local community and can help reach those more likely to get lung cancer. By talking face-to-face, you can help people understand the main messages and overcome any concerns. Tell them that it's important to get any symptoms checked out and encourage them to speak to their doctor.

'I would urge anybody with symptoms...like a persistent cough, to go and see their doctor straight away. I'm glad I did.'

Ann Long, aged 77, lung cancer survivor

Three things you can do

1 Promote the campaign

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

3 Encourage people to see their doctor

Key lung cancer facts

- Around 33,800 people are diagnosed with lung cancer in England every year, around 32,800 of whom are 50 and over
- In England, around 28,100 people die from lung cancer every year
- Between 10–15% of lung cancer patients in England are diagnosed at the earliest stage – around 70% are diagnosed at a late stage

‘I’ve supported local and national Be Clear on Cancer lung campaigns, so I know we can make a difference by simply talking to people in our local areas about it. They often feel more at ease talking to us and open up about what is on their mind. Sometimes people say they don’t want to bother their GP, especially about a cough. We can explain why it’s important they go and reassure them that their doctor really does want to know.’

Peter Allonby, Cancer Champion, Middleton

You don’t need a medical background or to give medical advice. You can:

- Explain that it’s best to get symptoms checked out – the chances are it’s nothing serious, but it may still need treating. But if it is cancer, 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.
- Suggest they take someone with them to their appointment once it’s booked, if it’s appropriate. Some people might also welcome support to make an appointment.
- Help people feel more confident about speaking to their doctor by offering to run through what they will say during the appointment. Suggest they underline their symptoms 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.
- Reassure people that their doctor will want to know if their symptoms haven’t gone away, have changed, or got worse, even if they have seen the doctor already. Explain that it’s important they go back and see their doctor again.
- Ask people to come back 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.

Remember, this campaign isn’t about lifestyle, such as smoking habits, but encouraging people to see their GP if they have symptoms.

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

A Cancer Research UK nurse, who specialises in communicating about cancer, advises: ‘It is important to feel confident and to try to make cancer a normal part of conversation – you don’t have to have the answers, talking about it is the most important part. Find phrases that you are comfortable with and practise using them.’

‘You could start by talking about the campaign and asking people if they saw it on TV. Someone might have stopped noticing their cough, especially if they’ve had it for a few weeks, or think it’s not worth getting it checked out. If you are concerned about someone 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?”’

Three things you can do:

1 Promote the campaign. Put up posters in your local area and have leaflets handy to give to people and help you explain the campaign. You can order free posters and leaflets through 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 make an appointment or open up about a symptom they’ve been hiding or didn’t think was serious. We need to encourage people to talk openly about cancer. This campaign gives us all the chance to do that.

3 Encourage people to see their doctor. If people are worried about possible symptoms, we know that they often just need a nudge from family, friends or those around them to persuade them to go to their doctor.

Find out more

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