



NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release

NHS urges people to get cancer symptoms checked as GP referrals drop by 73%

People in the West Midlands who suspect they may have cancer symptoms are being urged to seek help despite the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

Health leaders at NHS England and NHS Improvement in the Midlands are stressing the importance of having worrying signs checked out as soon as possible.

Latest figures have revealed that there is a sharp drop in cancer referrals as patients are not contacting their GP for health advice. Referrals from GPs were down by 73 per cent in the week ending 19 April 2020 compared with the week ending 1 March 2020.

Research by Portland has also found around a third of people would be worried about seeking out medical opinion on their symptoms. Getting coronavirus or giving it to their family were among the top reasons that people would not come forward when they have cancer symptoms along with fears that they could be a burden to the health service.

'Help us Help You', a major public information campaign, has now been launched to encourage people to contact their GP if they are experiencing the signs of cancer.

Nigel Sturrock, Medical Director at NHS England and NHS Improvement in the Midlands, said: "NHS staff have made huge efforts to deal with coronavirus but they are also working hard to ensure that patients can safely access essential services such as cancer checks and urgent surgery.

"From online consultations to the roll-out of cancer treatment hubs, we are doing all we can to make sure patients receive the life-saving care that they need.

"The earlier a cancer is diagnosed, the more likely it is treatment will be successful and the higher the chance of survival. So even in these stressful times it's vital people don't delay seeking help with cancer symptoms."

Rob Gornall, Clinical Director at West Midlands Cancer Alliance, said: "I would urge patients with symptoms that they are concerned could be related to early signs of cancer to seek medical help as early as possible. We are striving to provide safe environments for assessment and diagnostic checks and we are now approaching the capability to restore complex cancer treatments and expand our capacity to meet future demands."

For more information about the signs and symptoms of cancer visit <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/cancer/symptoms/>

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About NHS England and NHS Improvement

NHS England and NHS Improvement work together to lead the National Health Service (NHS) in England and support it in delivering improved care for patients.

The NHS in England deals with over 1 million patients every 24 hours and employs more than 1.5 million people, putting it in the top five of the world's largest workforces. NHS England and NHS Improvement share out more than £100 billion in funds and oversees Trusts and providers offering NHS care. It strongly believes in health and high quality care for all, now and for future generations.

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NHS England and NHS Improvement – Midlands

