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# 'Blood in Pee': How GPs can help with the new national campaign

**This autumn the NHS will be raising awareness of blood in urine as a symptom of bladder and kidney cancers. Your support is vital to earlier diagnosis of cancer.**

## 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 GP earlier.

### What is the main message of the new campaign?

If you notice blood in your pee, even if it's 'just the once', tell your doctor.

## When will national 'Blood in Pee' activity be running?

Adverts will appear on TV, radio and in the press from 15 October to 20 November 2013. A direct mail letter and leaflet will also be sent to people in key areas across England.

## Who is the campaign aimed at?

Men and women from lower socioeconomic groups **over the age of 50** and their key influencers, such as friends and family.

## Why focus on one main symptom?

Visible haematuria is a key symptom in over 80% of bladder cancers and over half of kidney cancers. Yet, when asked to name signs and symptoms of cancer, only 33% of people mention unexplained bleeding.

*Be Clear on Cancer* campaigns use everyday language to help people feel more comfortable when discussing symptoms with their GP. During testing, the word 'pee' was universally accepted.

## Is there any evidence that the 'Blood in Pee' campaign will work?

Three local pilots in 2012 have shown encouraging results:

- 23% increase in 2 Week Wait (2WW) referrals for suspected urological cancer in the pilot area\*

- Total cystoscopy figures for 18 PCTs covered by the local pilots indicate a 5.9% increase compared with the same months in 2011
- 5.3% increase in the number of bladder or kidney cancers diagnosed following a 2WW urgent referral for suspected urological cancer within the pilot area

A regional pilot campaign that ran January to March 2013 in the Tyne Tees and Borders TV regions has also been positive:

- The percentage of respondents saying they would see the GP the same day if they noticed any changes to pee or bladder habits significantly increased from 18% to 27%; this was particularly the case for men, where the increase was from 21% to 32%
- Knowledge of blood in urine as a definite warning sign of kidney/bladder cancer significantly increased amongst the target audience from 41% to 65%; this increase was seen in both men and women
- 28% increase in 2WW referrals for suspected urological cancer\*

\*Pathway covers several urological cancer types in addition to kidney and bladder

## What to expect during the 'Blood in Pee' campaign

The North of England Cancer Network saw a positive response from the public during the regional pilot campaign, so you are likely to see more people coming to your practice. GP attendance data from that pilot will be available later this year, but results from one local 'Blood in Pee' pilot in 2012 showed an overall increase in the number of patients presenting with haematuria during the campaign. Across 17 practices this equated to a maximum of around one extra patient per practice every two weeks.

It's difficult to predict the exact increase, but the national bowel campaign in January–March 2012 focused on a more common symptom and the number of extra visits across 355 practices also equated to approximately one additional patient with relevant symptoms per practice every two weeks.

[naedi.org/beclearoncancer/bloodinpee](http://naedi.org/beclearoncancer/bloodinpee)

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**If kidney and bladder cancers are diagnosed at the earliest stage, one-year survival is as high as 92–97%. At a late stage, it drops to just 25–34%**

**It is estimated that around 1,000 deaths from bladder and kidney cancers could be avoided in England each year if survival rates matched the best in Europe**

## **Bladder and kidney cancer reminders**

**You might find it helpful to keep these reminders easily accessible throughout the new *Be Clear on Cancer* campaign.**

### **Bladder and kidney cancer risk factors**

These cancers affect both men and women, and are more common in older age, with around 95% of cases diagnosed in those aged 50 and over. Smoking is the most important cause of both bladder and kidney cancers. Being overweight or obese increases the risk of kidney cancer; while having worked in certain manufacturing jobs that involved the use of dyes, diesel or some other chemicals increases the risk of bladder cancer. People on kidney dialysis and those with a family history of bladder or kidney cancer are also at higher risk.

Incidence of kidney cancer has been rising over recent years; although it is thought that some of this is due to better detection methods, such as CT scans and ultrasound, part of the increase is thought to be due to lifestyle factors.

### **Bladder cancer symptoms**

- Haematuria
- Needing to pass urine very often or very suddenly
- Pain when passing urine

### **Kidney cancer symptoms**

- Haematuria
- A constant pain below the ribs
- An abdominal mass
- Other more vague symptoms include unexplained weight loss, high temperature, night sweats, a general sense of feeling unwell, or tiredness

### **Referral and assessment**

Recent research has found that women were more likely than men to see their GP three or more times before being referred for diagnostic tests for bladder and kidney cancers, even in the presence of macroscopic haematuria.

Remember, if blood in urine is painless; your patient is over 40 with recurrent or persistent urinary tract infections associated with blood in urine; or has blood in urine with no identifiable infection, NICE guidelines recommend making an urgent referral (via 2 Week Wait).

Continue to use your clinical judgement. If you treat someone for a suspected infection in the first instance, remind them that it's important for them to come back to see you if there's no improvement or if they notice other possible symptoms.

**'During the regional pilot, when the TV adverts ran throughout my area, I did see an increase in patients coming to the practice with related symptoms. It was manageable though and provided the chance to talk about other associated conditions, as well as the campaign. As a GP, I may only see a case of bladder or kidney cancer every couple of years, but it's important to make the most of every opportunity to discuss possible symptoms and start conversations about lifestyle choices.'**

Dr Stephen Doherty, GP and Cancer Lead for Northumberland

### **What about the impact on secondary care?**

NHS Improving Quality will work with Strategic Clinical Networks to help ensure the NHS is prepared for the campaign. Trusts have been informed about the campaign and advised to plan for expected increases in referrals, diagnostic tests and treatment. There is an additional briefing sheet to support hospital providers.

### **Three things you can do to help**

**1 Talk about the new campaign.** It may prompt people who've previously ignored blood in their urine to come and see you. But they may be embarrassed, not find it easy to communicate their symptoms, be afraid, or worry they're wasting your time.

**2 Make the most of available support.** There is a wealth of information to support you, including:

- NICE referral guidelines for suspected cancer
- A BMJ Learning online education tool: 'Tackling late diagnosis of cancer'
- Guidance on safety netting to improve early cancer diagnosis in primary care
- The NHS and local authorities are being encouraged to work together to plan for this campaign. Your CCG may have a GP cancer lead who can give you further information relating to your local area.

**3 Encourage your colleagues to support the campaign.** Practice nurses, receptionists and practice managers all have an important role to play. Make sure everyone is aware that there is a new national campaign, so they can support it – there are also briefing sheets for nurses and practice managers. Prepare for more patients coming to your practice as a result of the campaign.

### **Find out more**

- **Visit [naedi.org/beclearoncancer/bloodinpee](http://naedi.org/beclearoncancer/bloodinpee) for more information and resources**
- **Find out more about the aims and background to the 'Blood in Pee' campaign**
- **The public-facing website for the 'Blood in Pee' campaign is [nhs.uk/bloodinpee](http://nhs.uk/bloodinpee)**