

Pancreatic cancer: A diagnostic guide for GPs



Treatment resistant dyspepsia



- Indigestion symptoms that are not responding to PPIs.

New-onset type 2 diabetes mellitus



- Underweight
- Normal weight
- When there is no other associated metabolic condition or family history of diabetes.

Back and/or epigastric pain or discomfort



- Radiating dorsally
- Relieved by sitting & leaning forward
- The back pain is often described as where the bra strap would sit.

New-onset IBS like symptoms in those >45 years



- Common misdiagnosis of pancreatic cancer
- It is essential to rule out pancreatic cancer as a cause for bloatedness, flatulence and change of bowel habit, especially if a patient has never had an IBS diagnosis before.

NICE guidelines for suspected cancer: recognition and referral [NG12] 2015

Refer using a 'suspected cancer pathway referral' (for an appointment within 2 weeks) for pancreatic cancer if they are aged 40 and over and have jaundice.

Urgent (within two weeks) direct access CT scan, or urgent ultrasound scan if CT is not available.

Consider an urgent direct access CT scan (to be performed within 2 weeks), or an urgent ultrasound scan if CT is not available, to assess for pancreatic cancer in people aged 60 and over with weight loss AND any of the following:

- Diarrhoea
- Vomiting
- Back pain
- Constipation
- Abdominal pain
- New-onset diabetes.
- Nausea

Pancreatic cancer in adults: diagnosis and management [NG85] 2018

- Diagnosis
- Monitoring for people with an inherited high risk of pancreatic cancer
- Staging
- Psychological support
- Pain and nutrition management
- Management for resectable, borderline resectable and unresectable cancer.

Painless obstructive jaundice



- Yellowing of the skin and whites of the eyes
- Pruritus
- Dark urine.

Altered bowel movements



- Increased frequency
- Offensive smelling stools
- Steatorrhea (pale stools).

Unexplained weight loss, vomiting & anorexia



- Possible signs of malignancy
- Unexplained weight loss is a red flag
- Can occur without any pain or apparent change in digestion.

Risk factors

- **Age**, the risk of having pancreatic cancer is low until the age of 50, when it increases sharply
- **Smoking is attributed to a third of cases**
- **Family history** of pancreatic cancer and familial cancer syndromes
- **Obesity**
- **Presence of the BRCA1/2 genetic mutation.**