Spotting the signs of cancer
For women
Thousands of people beat cancer every year.

When cancer is diagnosed at an early stage, treatment is often simpler and more likely to be successful. So finding cancer early can make a real difference.

More than one in three women in the UK will develop cancer at some point in their lives. The disease is mainly diagnosed in older people, with nearly nine out of 10 cases in the UK in people aged 50 and over.

In this leaflet you can find out about the key signs and symptoms women should look out for and why it is important to get these symptoms checked out by a doctor.
Why is spotting cancer early so important?

Today, more people than ever are surviving cancer. **Cancer survival rates in the UK have doubled in the last 40 years.** This is mainly because of better treatments, screening and earlier diagnosis. Almost two out of three women with breast cancer now survive the disease beyond 20 years. And when bowel cancer is caught at the earliest stage, more than nine in 10 people can be treated successfully.

But thousands more cancer deaths could be prevented each year if we improved early diagnosis and treatment even further.

So if you notice any unusual or persistent changes in your body, go and see your doctor. You have nothing to lose, but you could have everything to gain. If it is something serious, finding it at an early stage and getting treatment started promptly offers a better chance of beating the disease.
What should you look out for?

• Changes in the size, shape or feel of your breasts
• Any puckering, dimpling or redness of the skin on your breasts
• Changes in the position of the nipple, a rash or nipple discharge
• A mouth or tongue ulcer that lasts longer than three weeks
• A cough or croaky voice that lasts longer than three weeks
• Persistent difficulty swallowing or indigestion
• A change to more frequent bowel motions for three weeks or more
• Blood in your stools
• Problems passing urine
• Blood in your urine
• Bleeding from the vagina after the menopause or between periods
• A change in the size, shape or colour of a mole
• An unexplained pain or ache that lasts longer than four weeks
• An unusual lump or swelling anywhere on your body
• Unexplained weight loss or heavy night sweats
• A sore that won’t heal after several weeks

Do any of these apply to you? If so, they are most likely to be caused by something much less serious than cancer, but it is worth getting checked out by your doctor. You could take this leaflet with you to explain to your doctor why you’re there.
Cancer signs and symptoms

There are more than 200 different types of cancer, which can cause many different symptoms. Experts agree that the symptoms mentioned in this leaflet are some of the most important ones to look out for and act on. It’s also a good idea to get to know your body and what’s normal for you. This will make it easier for you to spot any unusual or persistent changes that should be checked out by a doctor.

Why not help spread the word about the importance of knowing your body and what to look out for by sharing this leaflet with family and friends, particularly those over 50 who are at much higher risk of cancer than younger people.

Find out about screening available at www.cancerresearchuk.org/cancer-info/spotcancerearly/screening/

Taking part in cancer screening could save your life. Cancer screening tests can help detect the disease at an early stage before symptoms have a chance to develop, and some can prevent cancer too. In the UK, we have three national screening programmes, for breast, cervical and bowel cancers. You need to be registered with a GP to be invited for cancer screening.
Common concerns about visiting your doctor

I'm worried about what the doctor might find
Many people feel worried about finding out that they are unwell. But if there is something wrong, finding it at an early stage and getting treatment started quickly can mean treatment will be easier and the chances of a successful outcome better.

I don't feel or look ill, so it can't be anything serious
When cancers are small they may not make you feel or look unwell. It is important to see your doctor if you notice any persistent or unusual changes, even if they seem insignificant at the time.

I've already seen the doctor about my symptoms and I don't want to bother him/her again
If your symptoms haven’t gone away, have changed or have got worse, your doctor will want to know, so it’s worth making a new appointment. Be stubborn if your symptom is stubborn.
When my husband spotted an odd looking mole on my upper arm, I didn’t think too much of it at the time. But now I’m so glad I told my doctor about it – that short conversation probably saved my life.

Glenys, 57, Tesco customer assistant, cancer survivor
This leaflet is brought to you by Cancer Research UK, Tesco Charity of the Year 2012. Together, we’re raising vital awareness and funds to help beat cancer through early diagnosis and detection. Please support our partnership’s national Check Up at the Checkout campaign this November by reading these leaflets and keeping them for reference, or passing them on to a friend or relative. This will help more people survive cancer and keep more families together. For more about the Tesco Charity of the Year 2012 partnership visit www.cancerresearchuk.org/tesco

About Cancer Research UK
Cancer Research UK is the world’s leading charity dedicated to research into the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of cancer. If you would like to support our work, please call 0871 641 0500 or visit our website www.cancerresearchuk.org/tesco

Further information
For more about the signs and symptoms of cancer visit www.spotcancerearly.com

For more about cancer visit our patient information website www.cancerhelp.org.uk

If you want to talk in confidence about cancer, call our information nurses on freephone 0808 800 4040.

All our leaflets are thoroughly researched and based on the most up-to-date scientific evidence. They are reviewed externally by independent experts and updated regularly. Find out more at www.cancerresearchuk.org/health

You can order our full range of leaflets free online at www.cancerresearchuk.org/leaflets

Cancer Research UK operates in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Cancer Research UK is a registered charity in England and Wales (1089464) and in Scotland (SC041666).