



Dear GP,

Endometrial Cancer Awareness

We are a group of Gynaecology Oncology Macmillan Clinical Nurse Specialists working within the Greater Manchester and Cheshire area. September is **Endometrial Cancer Awareness Month** and we would like to draw your attention to the 4th most common cancer affecting British women.

The incidence of this cancer is up by 40% and deaths by 20% over the past 20 years and is predicted to continue to rise, and to become more prevalent in women than lung and bowel cancer. However caught at an early stage it is a treatable and curable cancer.

Risk Factors

- **Age** – The risk of endometrial cancer increases with age. However, it is important to note that an increased number of younger women are being diagnosed with endometrial cancer and 22% of the women treated for endometrial cancer at St Mary's Hospital were under 55 in 2014.
- **Obesity** - the link between obesity and cancer is the highest for endometrial cancer. 34% of endometrial cancer is directly attributable to obesity and a woman with a BMI of 42 has a near 10 fold increased risk of endometrial cancer compared to the general population.
- **Diabetes** – diabetes increases a woman's risk of endometrial cancer.
- **Hormonal factors** – longer exposure to oestrogen (early menarche, late menopause, not having children etc.) increases endometrial cancer risk.
- **Genetic factors** – some genetic conditions can increase the risk of endometrial cancer. Women with Lynch Syndrome, also known as HNPCC, have a 30 – 60% risk of developing endometrial cancer over their lifetime.
- **Tamoxifen** – increases the risk of endometrial cancer usually when taken over a long period of time.
- **Polycystic ovary syndrome** – a sufferer may have infrequent or no periods, be overweight or diabetic. These are all linked with endometrial cancer risk.

What are the symptoms?

The most common symptom of endometrial cancer is abnormal vaginal bleeding. This abnormal bleeding can be

- Post-menopausal bleeding
- Bleeding that is unusually heavy
- Bleeding between periods
- Vaginal discharge – from pink and watery to dark and foul smelling

Less common symptoms of endometrial cancer can include pain or discomfort in the lower abdomen, dyspareunia or haematuria.

Irregular bleeding is a common symptom of many other benign conditions but please consider malignancy, especially if women have risk factors for endometrial cancer.

When to refer?

- Any women with post-menopausal bleeding should be referred on an HSC pathway.
- The possibility of malignancy should be considered in women who are peri or pre-menopausal with a significant change to their menstrual habit in line with the abnormal bleeding described above, particularly if they have other risk factors. Referral for further investigations should be considered.

The NICE Guidance for Suspected Cancer: Recognition and Referral has recently been amended for endometrial cancer to refer only those women with post-menopausal bleeding over the age of 55 on an HSC pathway. Both we and our Consultant colleagues are of the opinion that malignancy should be considered in any women with post-menopausal bleeding regardless of age and therefore should be investigated as a matter of urgency.

Vaginal bleeding can also be a sign of cervical and vulval cancer so physical examination is recommended to rule out these as a cause of bleeding.

Thank you

Thank you for taking the time to read this. Below are links to sites that might be of interest

<http://wombcancersupportuk.weebly.com/>

www.cancer.manchester.ac.uk/wombcanceralliance

www.macmillan.org.uk

www.cancerresearchuk.org