

EngageGM

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What's new >>>

"Your questions answered"

ANSWER CANCER would like to thank all those who for the past few months have read our newsletter, EngageGM.

We are very grateful for the comments and feedback received.

Starting from August, we are introducing a new feature: "Your questions answered". This segment will be dedicated to answering some of the questions you may have about bowel, cervical, breast and prostate cancers. Questions around risk, prevention, signs and symptoms, support and fact-checking will all be addressed.

Please send all questions to: engagement@answercancergm.org.uk



Current topics >>>

Easing lockdown restrictions:

Lockdown might be easing, but the fight against the coronavirus continues. We still need to do more to keep ourselves safe, protect our loved ones and our beloved NHS. Is there anything else we need to be doing?

Recent media reports have highlighted the need for our nation to pay attention to the wider effects of the COVID-lockdown on health and general wellbeing.

Although many were excited to know that they can now step out to see friends, family and workmates they had not seen for a while, others felt (and still feel) less positive about the announcement.

They are unprepared, stressed and anxious about the idea of lockdown easing.

Such anxieties may be common amongst those who were asked to shield at the beginning of lockdown and people from Black Asian and other ethnic minority groups, who feel more at-risk from COVID than the rest of the population.

Although these worries may be legitimate, that should not prevent anybody who is worried about cancer or has noticed a change in their body, from seeing a doctor or going for a cancer screening appointment.

The NHS has created [COVID-protected safe spaces](#) in our hospitals, GP surgeries and screening units to ensure that people can be diagnosed and treated safely.

Mind, one of the largest mental health charities in the UK, [has some tips here](#) for those who continue to have such negative feelings about lockdown restrictions being eased.

**We are in together,
so let us do it
together.**

The important bits >>>

Set post-lockdown goals

As things start to get back to normal, it is important you take time to reflect on your life under lockdown and make positive changes. Here are a few goals to consider:



A good night's sleep: You may have changed your night-time routine during lockdown because of late night movies, long TV viewing times or social media. Now is time to switch back to an 8-hour night sleep mode. This is important because poor sleep is linked to stress, weight gain and other long-term illnesses which need to be avoided.

A healthy eating routine: It is common to comfort-eat when bored or anxious, but that can be detrimental to our health. Why not try setting strict mealtimes and pre-plan your meals? It is important you avoid eating close to bedtime, include more fibre, vegetables and fruits in your diet, cut out processed meat and reduce red meat intake, and don't forget to drink plenty of water.

Get updated information: Rumours and speculations fuel anxiety. Getting updated information from the right sources can dispel myths and restore your confidence.

Maintain a good exercising routine: 30 minutes of exercise, three times a week is a good starting point. The NHS [couch to 5k](#) can help you get active again.

Get to know your body: Most cancers can be treated if diagnosed early. It is good to know your body and what is normal for you. If you detect any new changes, it is vital you get it checked immediately. In most cases it may be nothing to worry about.

Talking trends >>>

Our screening appointments

During the three months the country was under lockdown there was a "smear slump", the Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership has stated.

According to the [Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership](#) there was around an 80% drop in smear tests during the lockdown period. That figure has been improving since June but at a slower rate.

Why is cancer screening important?

1 in 2 people living in the UK will get cancer in their lifetime. Cancer screening helps to detect cancer at an earlier stage and thus saves thousands of lives each year.

What if you were invited (or received a test kit) before or during the lockdown period, but failed to attend (or can't find the kit)?

You can still contact your GP to get another appointment (or test kit) sent over to you.

So who gets invited for cancer screening?

Bowel cancer screening (FIT test): Everybody aged 60-74 is sent a test kit through the post to complete every 2 years. Over 74 year olds can also request a screening kit.

Cervical screening (Smear test): Women between the ages of 25-49 are invited every 3 years. Those between 50-64 are invited every 5 years. Trans men or anybody who has a cervix are also eligible.

Breast cancer screening (Mammogram): Trans, non-binary and women aged 50-70 are invited every 3 years. Those over 70 years old can request to be screened.

What has changed since COVID?

Screening staff now follow strict guidance on infection control to protect us and themselves. This means that in some instances, you will be denied the option of taking someone with you for your appointment.

In rare cases, you may be required to isolate prior to the appointment or take a COVID test.

All screening staff will be in PPE for your safety and theirs.

What we've been up to & what you have been telling us

July was Ethnic Minority Cancer Awareness Month (EMCAM) and the engagement and delivery team of Answer Cancer were busy online and on the airwaves. Here are a few highlights.

Answer Cancer joined the Jain Samaj Manchester (JSM) on the 9th and 10th July 2020 for a 2-day virtual cancer awareness session. The sessions were presented in Gujarati, English and in Sign Language.

Session 1 - women's night - focused on breast, cervical and bowel cancers whilst Session 2 - the men's night - created awareness around bowel, oral and prostate cancers. With more than 150 people in attendance, the event, which was facilitated by Dr. Minaxi Desai (an Answer Cancer Champion) and other health professionals, was described by many as a "huge success". Here are a few quotes from the Zoom chat box:

"An excellent overall presentation from all speakers, very informative talk."

"Thank you to all... It is extremely important to make sure, as we get older, we become more (cancer) aware."

The following week was the turn of the Nigerian Community of Rochdale, who also organised a 2-day cancer awareness and

champion recruitment session on Zoom. Led by Mary Adekugbe, the newly recruited Answer Cancer champions shared their own experiences around cancer and why they decided to sign up as community champions. This is what one participant had to say:

"The word 'cancer' is a taboo in our community and so people are either wrongly informed or not informed about cancer prevention. I am happy with what you (Answer Cancer) are doing to educate our people. Thank you for this fun session".

Similar sentiments have been shared on social media channels, (especially Twitter) where the BHA (a partner organisation) tweeted 31 cancer awareness messages (1 per day) to get people to start a conversation around cancer.

It was not only about ethnic minorities for July. Answer Cancer collaborated with the Gaddum Centre and the Manchester Carers Network in a maiden "Let's talk Cancer" event for carers living in Manchester. At the end of the fruitful session, the team was inundated with requests for young carers and workplace awareness sessions.

Answer Cancer would like to salute all Cancer Champions for their hard work in getting people cancer-aware.

Your questions Answered >>>

Q: I had an HPV vaccination some years back. Do I still need to attend the "smear test"?

A: Yes!

The Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) vaccine can provide protection against certain cases of cervical cancer but not all.

This protection can last for at least 10 years.

It is important that you continue going for regular cervical cancer screening so that cell changes are captured early.

Final Thoughts...

If we detect cancer early it can be treated. You can find signs and symptoms of common cancers in community languages [here](#).

Eat well, live well, and get checked!

About us >>>

Answer Cancer is a partnership of four VCSE organisations: Unique Improvements, Voluntary Sector North West, BHA for Equality, and Salford CVS. Our work is funded by the Greater Manchester Health and Social care partnership.

Our aim is to address the cultural, social and systemic barriers that prevent people from taking up cancer screening.

How do we do it?

1. We work with community and faith groups across Greater Manchester, so they know what causes cancer & why screening is important.
2. We offer free information sessions on breast, bowel and cervical cancer screening.
3. We train individuals as Answer Cancer Champions.
4. We support community groups with grants so they can increase awareness about cancer screening.

For more information please contact:

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