

# Ethnic minorities less aware of cancer symptoms and more likely to identify barriers to seeking medical help

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Ethnic minorities in England are less aware of cancer symptoms and more likely to say they wouldn't see the doctor, even when they have a symptom that they think might be serious, according to research being presented at the National Cancer Research Institute (NCRI) Cancer Conference in Liverpool.

Researchers looked at nearly 50,000 responses to the Cancer Research UK Cancer Awareness Measure\* from people across England. They found that ethnic minority groups were consistently less aware of [cancer symptoms](#).

People with a black ethnic background were half as likely as white people to recognise that unexplained bleeding could be a symptom of cancer; while South Asians were a quarter as likely as white people to recognise that an unexplained lump or swelling could be a cancer symptom.

Most ethnic minority groups also tended to describe more barriers putting them off going to the doctor to discuss an unexplained symptom. South Asians were most likely to report embarrassment and a lack of confidence to talk about their symptoms. But [white people](#) were most likely to report that worrying about wasting the doctor's time would put them off going to their GP.

Maja Niksic, study author at King's College London, said: "This study highlights the need to develop more targeted health messages in order to encourage people with symptoms to visit their GPs sooner. It's essential that we tailor these messages to address the different needs and gaps in cancer awareness that exist between different ethnic groups.

"Early diagnosis is a vital part of improving survival from cancer, which is why it's essential to increase public awareness of the signs and symptoms of cancer - and encourage people to seek medical help if they notice any unexplained changes in their body."

Sara Hiom, director of early diagnosis at Cancer Research UK, said: "This type of research helps us to adapt our information and find better ways to encourage people to get their symptoms checked out quickly.

"Thousands of people beat cancer every year and treatment is more likely to be successful when cancer is diagnosed in the earliest stages. Getting to know your body and what's normal for you will help you spot something unusual or persistent, which you should mention to your doctor as soon as possible."

Professor Matthew Seymour, NCRI's Clinical Research Director, said: "This research highlights the importance of tailoring public [health messages](#) to different groups so that everyone has a better chance of beating cancer, regardless of their ethnic background.

"Being aware of common cancer symptoms, as well as being confident in seeking advice from the GP, gives people the best chance of getting diagnosed in the earliest stages, when treatment is more likely to be effective."

**More information:** [conference.ncri.org.uk/abstrac ... /abstracts/B085.html](https://conference.ncri.org.uk/abstrac.../abstracts/B085.html)

Provided by Cancer Research UK

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