

Don't delay if cancer symptoms appear—call your doctor

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The coronavirus pandemic has many people putting off medical

appointments, but if you have possible cancer symptoms, don't delay.

A small lump in a [breast](#), blood in your stool or an odd-looking mole, for example, should not be ignored, according to experts at Cedars-Sinai Health System in Los Angeles.

"We're seeing a concerning trend that some cancer diagnoses are being delayed because of perceived disruptions of care due to COVID-19," said Dr. Dan Theodorescu, director of Cedars-Sinai Cancer.

"I strongly encourage anyone who suspects they might have cancer to get in touch with their physicians, as the use of telemedicine or other available physical-distancing tools will allow them to get [medical help](#) immediately," he said in a health system news release.

For example, signs of colon cancer include blood in the stool, changes in bowel habits that last more than a few days, ongoing gas pains, bloating and constant fatigue.

Skin cancer symptoms include a skin growth that changes in size, color or shape, with irregular ragged edges. Watch also for sores that don't heal or wart-like growths that bleed or crust over.

"Any change in a preexisting skin condition, anything new at all—an ulcerated growth, bleeding, itching, or inflamed [lymph nodes](#) near a skin lesion—should be discussed with your doctor. Initial visits can be done via telemedicine. Don't wait," said Dr. Omid Hamid, director of the Melanoma Program at The Angeles Clinic and Research Institute.

Symptoms of lung cancer can include cough or shortness of breath that won't go away or gets worse, rib or shoulder pain, unexplained weight loss or coughing up blood.

"Some lung cancer symptoms are similar to non-cancer conditions, so it's tempting to write them off," said lung cancer specialist Dr. Karen Reckamp, director of the Division of Medical Oncology, adding that early detection is vital to your treatment and outcome.

"Diagnostic procedures and treatments can be done safely at this time," she added.

A need to urinate often, a weak urine flow, pain or burning while urinating and [erectile dysfunction](#) may be signs of prostate cancer.

Dr. Stephen Freedland, director of the Center for Integrated Research in Cancer and Lifestyle, recently used telemedicine and video conferences to consult with a newly diagnosed patient with non-aggressive prostate cancer.

"We discussed his options and decided we could just watch and wait," he said. "Now we have peace of mind."

Breast cancer can show up as a lump in a breast or underarm area. Symptoms can also include nipple discharge that is yellow or bloody and an itchy rash on the nipple. Breast [cancer](#) affects 1 in 7 women.

"If you have [breast cancer](#), we typically are able to adjust your treatment strategy to minimize the risk of immune suppression without compromising effectiveness," said Dr. Heather McArthur, breast medical oncologist. "Collaborating with surgeons, we also are able in some cases to safely postpone surgeries by giving drug treatment upfront. In short, we are able to give patients safe and effective treatment options during this difficult time."

More information: For more on cancer and COVID-19, visit the [American Cancer Society](#).

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