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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 Women in the UK.

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 20% of the women treated for endometrial cancer at St Mary's Hospital are under 55 years of age.

- **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** – type 2 diabetes mellitus 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, an inherited predisposition to cancer caused by pathogenic variants affecting the mismatch repair (MMR) genes, have a 30 – 60% risk of developing endometrial cancer over their lifetime.
- **Tamoxifen** – increases the risk of endometrial cancer when taken for a long time for breast cancer prevention or treatment.
- **Polycystic ovary syndrome** – a sufferer may have infrequent or no periods, have diabetes and/or obesity. 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 (PMB, unexplained vaginal bleeding more than 12 months after menstruation has stopped because of the menopause)
- Menstrual 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?

- According to current NICE guidelines, women with post-menopausal bleeding aged >55 years should be referred urgently on a suspected endometrial cancer (HSC) pathway
- Urgent referral should be *considered* for women <55 years with PMB
- Unscheduled bleeding on HRT is very common especially within the first 3-6 months of starting or changing an HRT preparation. Urgent referral should be *considered* if bleeding persists beyond 3-6 months, and particularly in women with other risk factors e.g. obesity.
- The possibility of malignancy should be considered in women who are peri or premenopausal with a significant change to their menstrual habit in line with the abnormal bleeding described above, particularly if they have risk factors.
- In women *without* abnormal bleeding who have an incidental finding of an abnormal endometrium on ultrasound scan, referral for further investigations is recommended at an endometrial thickness of 11mm or greater

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.

The GM Post Menopausal Bleeding Flowchart for Unscheduled Bleeding on HRT can be found here:

[PMB-Algorithm-FINAL.pdf \(gmcancer.org.uk\)](https://www.gmcancer.org.uk/PMB-Algorithm-FINAL.pdf)

Thank you

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

<https://peachestrust.org/>

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

www.macmillan.org.uk

www.cancerresearchuk.org

