

Edinburgh residents encouraged to have earlier checks on cancer symptoms

The Scottish Government's 'Be the Early Bird' campaign has a new focus on head and neck cancer.

As Scotland's sixth most common cancer, around 1,300 new cases are diagnosed across the country each year yet only one third are detected early*. The campaign is encouraging people across Edinburgh to recognise possible cancer symptoms and not delay contacting their GP practice or dentist.

To emphasise this message, a group of early birds met with Health Secretary Neil Gray to share vital stories of how early cancer detection provided more treatment options, helped them live well and allowed them to continue doing the things they love.

The group are urging other people in Edinburgh with unusual, persistent symptoms to do the same and act early.

Daniel Morrison, 38, was one of the early birds at the breakfast. He was diagnosed with salivary gland cancer but is now recovering and living well with his young family thanks to early detection at his GP practice.

Daniel said: "It's thanks to spotting my cancer early that I'm now delighted to say I'm in recovery and able to look forward excitedly to the future with my young family.

"This is why I'm passionate about the Scottish Government's Be the Early Bird campaign – it's so important that people understand the difference contacting your GP practice early can make.

"I'd noticed fluid under my tongue and felt really fatigued but it'd be easy to try and ignore as nothing. I'm so thankful however that I got checked early, treated and looked after by a team of amazing medical experts throughout."

The Scottish Government's '*Be the Early Bird*' campaign, aims to reinforce the benefits of finding cancer at an earlier stage when there's more treatment options available, a greater likelihood of living well after treatment, and better news to tell the family.

Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care Neil Gray said: "Early detection is so important to cancer care. The stories from our 'early birds' demonstrate the positive impact it can have on treatment and outcomes.

"So, I'm urging everyone to make sure they contact their GP practice about any unusual, persistent symptoms. The sooner we act, the better the chances for treatment and recovery. So, let's be vigilant – if something doesn't feel right, don't wait, get checked early."

Dr Gillian Leslie, Deputy Chief Dental Officer for Scotland, said: "Head and neck cancer incidence rates have gradually increased over the past decade, making early detection more important than ever. Dentists play a vital role in detecting signs of cancer. Routine dental examinations allow us to identify subtle changes in the mouth and throat, and surrounding tissues that could signal early-stage cancer.

"Early diagnosis leads to better treatment options, so we urge people to attend their check-ups. Most importantly, if you notice any sores, lumps, red or white patches that do not go away after three weeks, don't wait until your next appointment – we want to see you. It's crucial not to dismiss any potential symptoms. Get checked right way."

Dr Douglas Rigg, GP, said: "If you are worried about unexplained bleeding, an unusual lump, unexplained weight loss or something that doesn't feel normal for you, we want to know. Don't be embarrassed or sit at home worrying, give your GP practice a call. It probably won't be cancer but if it is, finding cancer earlier can mean a much wider range of treatment options being available, and a better chance of living well again."

getcheckedearly.org



John Withers, Margaret Sherwood, Neil Gray, Jackie Kelly and Daniel Morrison – The Scottish Government’s “Be the Early Bird’ Campaign to raise awareness for the early detection of Cancer