

## Primary Care Guidance for Serious but Non-Specific Symptoms (SNSS)

Non-Specific Symptoms cover the cohort of patients who do not fit clearly into a single 'urgent cancer' referral pathway, as defined by NG12, but who are, nonetheless, at risk of being diagnosed with cancer. Symptoms considered 'non-specific' include unexplained weight loss, fatigue, abdominal pain or nausea; and/or a GP 'gut feeling' about cancer.

NG12 states that patients with unexplained weight loss, loss of appetite and unexplained DVT can be due to several different types of cancer and recommend an assessment for additional symptoms, signs or findings that may help to clarify which cancer is most likely with additional investigations or onward urgent suspected cancer referral as appropriate.

This guidance is intended for patients who meet the criteria below:

### Patient eligibility criteria

Patients need to meet the following clinical criteria:

- 18 years of age or older
- Able to attend local site for CT scanning (hospital and or CDC)
- Not meeting other Urgent Suspected Cancer referral pathway.
- No likely benign diagnosis

PLUS, one or more of the following:

- New unexplained vague abdominal pain of 4 weeks or more
- New unexplained and unintentional weight loss (either documented >5% in a 3-month period or strong clinical suspicion)
- New unexplained constitutional symptoms of 4 weeks or more (loss of appetite, fatigue, nausea, malaise, bloating)
- New, unexplained, unexpected or progressive bone pain, including bone pain of 4 weeks or more in duration
- GP 'gut feeling' of possible cancer diagnosis

Please perform a physical examination (including breast and lymph nodes), arrange for a urine dipstick and request the SNSS panel (**APPENDIX 1**) on WebICE. This will automatically request the recommended blood tests, and a FIT test. You will be asked to confirm your patient's natal sex to allow appropriate requesting of PSA and Ca125 tests.

A pop-up message will appear prompting a request for an urgent CXR to be made. Do not request this if your patient has had a CXR within the last four weeks.

Please review the patient with the results of these initial tests. There are three potential outcomes:

1. A suspected site-specific cancer e.g. abnormal CXR, positive FIT enabling an urgent suspected cancer referral to be made to the relevant specialty.
2. A non-cancer diagnosis is made e.g. thyroid disease, diabetes.
3. No clear diagnosis and the patient continues to have concerning symptoms. For patients in this group please request CT chest/pelvis/abdo with contrast via WebICE. When asked about the level of urgency please select the 2WW option. The request will be reviewed by a consultant radiologist and the patient booked with the same priority as patients on an urgent suspected cancer pathway.
  - NB. Due to IR(ME)R, CT scans can only be requested by doctors.
  - For patients with frailty, please consider if an assessment by the Older Persons Medicine Team would be more appropriate.

## **APPENDIX 1**

SNSS initial investigations (urine dipstick, CxR, FIT and Webice SNSS panel)

- CxR
- Urine dipstick
- FIT
- FBC
- Coagulation Screen
- ESR and CRP
- U+E with e-GFR
- LFT (including globulins)
- TFT
- Hba1c
- Bone profile
- Coeliac Screen
- Ferritin
- Ca-125 (women)
- PSA (men)

Optional additional tests (where relevant to symptoms)

- B12/folate/iron studies (if anaemic)
- Myeloma Screen
- HIV
- LDH
- Autoimmune Screen

**Serious Non-Specific  
Symptoms Pathway**

**Eligibility Criteria**

- New unexplained vague abdominal pain of 4 weeks or more
- New unexplained and unintentional weight loss (either documented >5% in a 3-month period or strong clinical suspicion)
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Patient presents in Primary Care with serious non-specific but worrying symptoms

Clinical history and examination to include urine dipstix, GP requests NSS request panel + CXR on ICE

**REVIEW BY GP**

**OUTCOME 1**

Likely site-specific cancer diagnosis

USC Referral

**OUTCOME 2**

Persistent SNSS no site-specific diagnosis

CT Chest/Pelvis/Abdo with contract ICE request

**REVIEW BY GP**

**OUTCOME 1**

No clear evidence of cancer / disease. All tests negative

Safety Netting

**OUTCOME 2**

Non-cancer pathology found with no indication of cancer

Further tests and/or referral to relevant Specialist Team

**OUTCOME 3**

Likely site-specific cancer diagnosis

USC e-referral to relevant tumour site specific team

**OUTCOME 4**

Evidence of malignancy or metastasis but no primary site identified

USC e-referral to CUP team\*

**\*CUP referrals**

QEH [CUP.Service@qehkl.nhs.uk](mailto:CUP.Service@qehkl.nhs.uk).

NNUH CUP referrals can be made directly via ICE request using 'SPCUPRP – Cancer Unknown Primary Referral Pathway'.

JPUH referrals can be made via Acute Oncology Service (AOS).