Do you know the symptoms of primary bone cancer?

Primary bone cancers often present with vague symptoms, resembling non-urgent conditions such as growing pains or arthritis. Some symptoms may come and go, others may be constant. Asking your patient to explain all the symptoms experienced, including systemic ones is key to ruling out primary bone cancer.

A timely referral and diagnosis can save lives. On average, 18% of patients referred to a specialist Bone Cancer Centre by a GP are metastatic at diagnosis, compared to 41% of patients referred by A&E.

You can make a positive impact if you spot the signs and symptoms:

**Bone Pain**
- Constant or intermittent
- Worse at night
- Intensify with time
- Resistant to analgesia
- Worsened by massage

**Lump**
- Atypical bony or soft tissue swelling or mass
- Inflammation or tenderness
- Hot to the touch

**Other Symptoms**
- Pathological fractures
- Fatigue
- Headaches
- Eye and vision issues
- Fever
- Weight-loss
- Easy bruising

**Mobility**
- Unexplained limp
- Change in gait
- Reduced ROM
- Stiffness in a joint
- Reluctance to do normal activities
- Unable to walk
- Numbness and loss of strength in limbs
- Issues with balance

NICE Guidelines Red Flag Symptom

What to do if you suspect a primary bone cancer:

Refer for Plain X-ray via 2 week wait (adult) or within 48 hours (child).

If the results look indicative or suspicious for primary bone cancer: Refer directly to a specialist Bone Cancer Centre. For details on these, visit bcr.t.org.uk/awareness

If the results look negative or clear: If symptoms persist, refer for further imaging including MRI via 2 week wait (adult) or within 48 hours (child).


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