



TOP TIPS

Cancer and supporting people with learning disabilities (LD)

The health inequalities faced by people with learning disabilities (LD) in the UK start early in life and stem from barriers to accessing appropriate and effective health care and are therefore, to an extent, avoidable.

The Learning Disability Premature Mortality Review (LeDeR) programme has highlighted that people with a learning disability still die much younger than the rest of the population (on average 20 years) and are three times more likely to die from causes that could have been avoided.

Physical health checks and cancer screening can ensure that health problems are spotted earlier and, with the right type of care and support, treated effectively.



Disclaimer: These tips are intended only as good practice prompts. Please use your clinical judgement.

Top Tip 1

People with LD don't appear to have higher rates of cancer than the general population – **but they tend to get different types**, particularly colorectal cancer with some evidence for stomach and oesophageal cancer. The H. pylori bacteria could also be a possible cause of their increased risk of stomach cancer.

- Public Health England: [Health Inequalities – Cancer](#).
- British Journal of Family Medicine [common health problems of people with learning disabilities](#).

Think about...

My CPD: document the key points - what does this mean for me, so what?

My QI: Take action and document a simple Quality Improvement for my next appraisal.

Top Tip 2

People with LD **access cancer screening at much lower rates** than the general population. Please prompt people at their **annual health checks** to increase uptake.

- Cancer screening may not be accessible for some people (e.g. breast screening due to physical body shape) – in which case talk to person/ family /carers about what to look out for and risk factors, so they seek medical support when appropriate.
- **Cervical screening**: during their AHC, talk about whether cervical screening is appropriate as some patients who are not sexually active may not wish to be invited for screening.
- Ensure your female patients age <25 have had their **HPV vaccine** – to reduce their risk of developing cervical cancer, as they are entitled to this vaccine for free.
- **Pennine Breast Screening Unit** provide training to families, carers, and people with LD about checking their breasts and what to look out for - email: bth.penninehp@nhs.net
- **Bowel screening** – Your Cancer Alliance and the WY&H Partnership are working with the Screening Hub to improve access for people living with LD based on a [model in the North East](#). If you are contacted by the Hub/CCG asking for details of patients with LD, please engage with this.
- [PHE: cancer screening – making reasonable adjustments](#): Reasonable adjustments and screening information, including videos and leaflets for people with LD



Top Tip 3

Resources for people with LD

- Cancer Research UK and CHANGE have produced many [Easy Read resources to support people with LD and their carers](#) understand different aspects of cancer, including having cancer, going to the hospital and when a loved one dies from cancer.
- [FAiR advice](#) has also produced booklets, CDs, and other resources that are accessible to people with LD. Some focus on cancer-related topics including skin cancer, oesophageal cancer and screening for example.

With thanks to Vicky Donnelly and Sara Humphrey at Bradford District and Craven CCG for this information. Please contact: stefanie.gissing1@nhs.net for further details.