



## Heads Up from Health Protection - February 2026

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*This month's edition includes:-*

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- *BRCA Genes and Cancer Risk: A Simple Guide*
  - *Winter Vaccine Reminder*
  - *Act On Cancer Campaign*
  - *Cervical Bus*
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From this month, each edition will include a fun fact linked (loosely!) to the content of the bulletin.



The tiny pocket inside the front right pocket of your JEANS (not genes!) was originally designed in the 1800s to hold what?

**(find the answer below)**

## BRCA Genes and Cancer Risk: A Simple Guide

### What are genes?

Genes are small sections of DNA that act like instruction manuals for our bodies. We inherit them from our parents — half from our mum and half from our dad. These instructions help our bodies grow, develop, and function properly. Most of the time, genes help keep us healthy by repairing everyday damage in our cells.

Sometimes, however, a gene can develop a change — often called a *fault* or *mutation*. This can affect how well it works and may increase the risk of certain health conditions, including some cancers.

**BRCA1** and **BRCA2** are two important genes we inherit from both biological parents. Their main job is to repair DNA damage and help protect us from cancer.

**Not everyone with a BRCA1 or BRCA2 variant will develop cancer**, but if one of these genes has a fault, it doesn't work as effectively as it should. This doesn't cause cancer on its own — instead, it reduces the body's ability to repair DNA damage properly. Over time, this damage can build up, and if enough changes occur in a cell, it may eventually become cancerous.

People with a BRCA1 or BRCA2 alteration have a **higher risk** of developing certain cancers, mainly **breast, ovarian and prostate cancer**. Scientists do not yet fully understand why these genes mainly affect these specific cancers, or exactly how normal cells turn into cancer cells — but we do know that reduced DNA repair plays an important role.

The NHS offers genetic testing for people who may be at higher risk because of family history or ancestry. This includes access to a [national BRCA testing programme](#), such as the free NHS [Jewish BRCA Testing Programme](#), which provides home saliva tests for eligible people. If you are found to have a BRCA1 or BRCA2 mutation, the NHS will offer extra monitoring, screening, and discussions about ways to reduce your risk.

## What is the difference between BRCA1 & BRCA2?

Both **BRCA1** and **BRCA2** (**BRCA is an abbreviation for BREast CAncer gene.** ) are genes that everyone has, but the two genes are *not identical* — each is linked with slightly different cancer risks.

### BRCA1 & BRCA2

- Mainly linked to a **higher risk of breast cancer**.
- Also increases the risk of **ovarian cancer**.

### BRCA2

- Increases the risk of **breast cancer**, but has a **broader range** of associated cancers.
- Raises the risk of **ovarian cancer, prostate cancer, pancreatic cancer, gallbladder and bile duct cancers**, and **melanoma (skin cancer)**.

[BRCA gene | Macmillan Cancer Support](#)

## Breast Screening for BRCA1/2 Carriers

Women (or those assigned female at birth) in England who have a BRCA mutation are classed as **very high risk** and follow a different breast screening schedule through the NHS. According to national guidance:

- **Ages 25–39:** Yearly **MRI scan**
- **Ages 40–50:** Yearly **MRI + mammogram**
- **Ages 51–70:** Annual **mammogram**, with MRI added if needed ([gov.uk](#))

This extra screening helps detect cancer early, when it can be treated more effectively.

## Prostate Screening for BRCA1/2 Carriers

Men (or those assigned male at birth) with a BRCA mutation — especially **BRCA1/2** — have a higher lifetime risk of prostate cancer and are more likely to develop an aggressive type.

[prostatecanceruk.org](http://prostatecanceruk.org)

The **UK National Screening Committee (UK NSC)** has recommended:

- A [targeted prostate screening programme](#) for men aged **45–61** *with a confirmed BRCA1 or BRCA2 mutation*, using a PSA blood test **every two years**.  
[news.cancer...archuk.org](http://news.cancerresearchuk.org)

*Those over 50 years old can also request a PSA without symptoms*

This targeted approach aims to find prostate cancer early in the people most likely to benefit.

## How to Get Tested or Get Support

- Speak to your **GP** if you have a family history of breast, ovarian, or prostate cancer. They can refer you to [NHS genetics services](#).
- If you have at least **one Jewish grandparent and over the age of 18**, you may be eligible for the free NHS **Jewish BRCA Testing Programme**.
- People who test positive are offered NHS support, including early screening, risk-reducing options, and specialist counselling.

## Does a cancer diagnosis automatically trigger BRCA testing?

**Not automatically.**

The NHS in England only offers BRCA testing when someone meets certain **eligibility criteria**, not just because they have had cancer.

**When the NHS *does* offer BRCA testing?**

You *may* be offered BRCA testing **if the cancer fits specific NHS criteria**.

[Genetic tests to check your cancer risk - NHS](#)

Knowing about BRCA1 and BRCA2 helps people understand their cancer risk and take action early. With NHS support and local services here in Lancashire, anyone with concerns can speak to their GP, get the right advice, and feel more confident about protecting their health and their family's future.

## Winter Vaccines Reminder

**It's not too late to get the Flu vaccine.**

It's not too late to get the Flu vaccine. Eligible people – including those aged 65+, those who are pregnant, children aged 2 & 3 years (as of 31 August 2025) , and people with certain health conditions, can still book their free vaccine via the [NHS national booking system](#) to reduce the risk of severe illness.

The **RSV vaccine** is available to those aged 75 to 79, those who turned 80 years old after 1 September 2024 and is also offered to pregnant women at or beyond the 28-week mark, as the vaccine helps protect the newborn baby.

Vaccination helps provide the best protection against severe illness and hospitalisation for those at higher risk.



## Act On Cancer Campaign

The 'Talk, Check, Act on Cancer' campaign is an open, honest, straight-talking campaign designed to help everyone in our area take fast action on cancer. It encourages you to:

- Talk openly about cancer and talk to a doctor if you notice something has changed in your body.

- Check that you go to all of your cancer screening appointments when invited or check yourself regularly for any unusual signs or symptoms. Listen to your body and be cancer aware.
- Act quickly to protect your health. Don't delay, your doctor will want to see you if you have any worries or concerns about cancer.

Taking these steps helps doctors find cancer early, which is the best time to treat it.

You can find out more by visiting [Act On Cancer](#).

**TALK CHECK**  
**ACT on CANCER.**  
Early action saves lives.

**NHS**  
Lancashire and South Cumbria  
Cancer Alliance

Unexplained pain that won't go?

Losing weight without trying?

# Have you noticed...

Get it checked **right away.**

Blood in your poo or pee?

A new lump?

Your doctor will want to see you.  
**Book an appointment.**

**CHECK IT** ✓  
Don't chance it.

Listen to your body.  
**Act now on cancer.**

**I have these symptoms and I'm worried about them.**

- ☐ Unexplained pain
- ☐ Unexplained weight loss
- ☐ A new lump
- ☐ Blood in your poo or pee

**You can bring a friend or family member with you to your appointment.**

Your doctor will want to see you if you have **any of these symptoms**. Most of the time it won't be cancer, but getting checked can give you peace of mind, and if it is something serious, **finding it early makes all the difference**.

**5 Top Tips to help you to talk to your doctor**

**Be honest:** Tell the doctor everything that has changed, even if it feels embarrassing or small.


**Describe the change:** Say what is different and how long it's been happening. Try to give as much detail as you can.

**Write it down:** If you are worried you will forget what to say, write it down and any questions you have.

**Bring support:** You can ask a friend or family member to come with you.

**Don't be afraid to ask again:** If the doctor says something confusing, ask them to explain it again in a different way.

**Your doctor will want to see you.**  
Find out more: [ActOnCancer.co.uk/CheckIt](https://ActOnCancer.co.uk/CheckIt)



## Living Well Bus - Cervical Screening

If you live in the Lancashire & South Cumbria area, look out for the Living Well Bus, where you can access a private and discreet cervical screen (also known as a smear test) without an appointment.

Scan the QR code or visit [www.cwp.nhs.uk/livingwellservice](https://www.cwp.nhs.uk/livingwellservice) to find when the Living Well Service will be visiting an area near you.



Dates, times and locations can also be found on the posters below. (click on the image to flick through the different posters)





## Is your cervical screening test due or overdue?

(commonly known as a smear test)



The mobile cervical screening unit will be in **BLACKBURN WITH DARWEN** at the following locations:

- Friday, 6<sup>th</sup> February 2026
  - 🕒 11:00 AM – 4:00 PM
  - 📍 Audley Children's Centre, Pringle Street, Blackburn, BB1 1SF
- Wednesday, 11<sup>th</sup> February 2026
  - 🕒 11:00 AM – 4:00 PM
  - 📍 Little Harwood Family Hub Robinson Street, BB1 5PE
- Thursday, 19<sup>th</sup> February 2026
  - 🕒 11:00 AM – 4:00 PM
  - 📍 Women Zone Unit 3 Duckworth Street, BB2 2JQ
- Monday, 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2026
  - 🕒 11:00 AM – 4:00 PM
  - 📍 Shadsworth Family Hub Shadsworth Road, BB1 2HR
- Tuesday, 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2026
  - 🕒 11:00 AM – 4:00 PM
  - 📍 Duke Street, 1 Duke Street, BB2 1DH
- Monday, 9<sup>th</sup> March 2026
  - 🕒 11:00 AM – 4:00 PM
  - 📍 Shadsworth Family Hub Shadsworth Road, BB1 2HR

- Saturday, 21<sup>st</sup> March 2026
  - 🕒 11:00 AM – 4:00 PM
  - 📍 Duke Street, 1 Duke Street, BB2 1DH
- Wednesday, 25<sup>th</sup> March 2026
  - 🕒 11:00 AM – 4:00 PM
  - 📍 Shadsworth Family Hub Shadsworth Road, BB1 2HR



### 1 - Blackburn with Darwen Cervical Screening



## Is your cervical screening test due or overdue?

(commonly known as a smear test)



The mobile cervical screening unit will be in **BLACKPOOL** at the following locations:

- Tuesday, 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2026
  - 🕒 11:00 AM – 4:00 PM
  - 📍 The Range, 1 Parkinson Way, Blackpool FY4 2AZ
- Monday, 9<sup>th</sup> February 2026
  - 🕒 11:00 AM – 4:00 PM
  - 📍 Sainsbury's, Bispham, 80 Red Bank Road, Bispham, Blackpool FY2 9HH
- Wednesday, 18<sup>th</sup> February 2026
  - 🕒 11:00 AM – 4:00 PM
  - 📍 @ the grange, Za Dinmore Avenue, Blackpool FY3 7RW
- Wednesday, 25<sup>th</sup> February 2026
  - 🕒 11:00 AM – 4:00 PM
  - 📍 Bickerstaffe Plaza, Number One Bickerstaffe Square, Blackpool FY1 3AH
- Thursday, 5<sup>th</sup> March 2026
  - 🕒 11:00 AM – 4:00 PM
  - 📍 Lidl, 127 Devonshire Road, Blackpool FY3 8BL
- Wednesday, 11<sup>th</sup> March 2026
  - 🕒 11:00 AM – 4:00 PM
  - 📍 Tesco Clifton Retail Park, Clifton Road, Blackpool FY4 4UJ

- Wednesday, 18<sup>th</sup> March 2026
  - 🕒 11:00 AM – 4:00 PM
  - 📍 The Range, 1 Parkinson Way, Blackpool FY4 2AZ
- Friday, 27<sup>th</sup> March 2026
  - 🕒 11:00 AM – 4:00 PM
  - 📍 Sainsbury's, Bispham, 80 Red Bank Road, Bispham, Blackpool FY2 9HH



### 2 - Blackpool Cervical Screening



## Is your cervical screening test due or overdue?

(commonly known as a smear test)



The mobile cervical screening unit will be in **PRESTON** at the following locations:

- Thursday, 5<sup>th</sup> February 2026
  - 🕒 11:00 AM – 4:00 PM
  - 📍 St. Bernard's Church, Elswick Road, Preston, PR2 1NT
- Wednesday, 11<sup>th</sup> February 2026
  - 🕒 11:00 AM – 4:00 PM
  - 📍 Preston Flag Market, 3-4 Cheapside, Preston PR1 2AP
- Saturday, 21<sup>st</sup> February 2026
  - 🕒 11:00 AM – 4:00 PM
  - 📍 Preston Community Hub, Samuel Street, Preston, PR1 4YE
- Monday, 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2026
  - 🕒 11:00 AM – 4:00 PM
  - 📍 St. Bernard's Church, Elswick Road, Preston, PR2 1NT
- Friday, 5<sup>th</sup> March 2026
  - 🕒 11:00 AM – 4:00 PM
  - 📍 Preston Flag Market, 3-4 Cheapside, Preston PR1 2AP
- Thursday, 12<sup>th</sup> March 2026
  - 🕒 11:00 AM – 4:00 PM
  - 📍 St. Bernard's Church, Elswick Road, Preston, PR2 1NT

- Thursday, 19<sup>th</sup> March 2026
  - 🕒 11:00 AM – 4:00 PM
  - 📍 St. Bernard's Church, Elswick Road, Preston, PR2 1NT
- Monday, 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2026
  - 🕒 11:00 AM – 4:00 PM
  - 📍 Preston Muslim Forum, 158 Castleton Road, Preston, PR16QH



### 3 - Preston Cervical Screening





## Is your cervical screening test due or overdue?

(commonly known as a smear test)



The mobile cervical screening unit will be in **HYNDBURN** at the following locations:

- **Thursday, 6<sup>th</sup> February 2026**  
🕒 11:00 AM – 4:00 PM  
📍 Hyndburn Leisure Centre, Henry Street, Church, BB5 4EP
- **Saturday, 21<sup>st</sup> February 2026**  
🕒 11:00 AM – 4:00 PM  
📍 Hyndburn Leisure Centre, Henry Street, Church, BB5 4EP
- **Thursday, 5<sup>th</sup> March 2026**  
🕒 11:00 AM – 4:00 PM  
📍 Inspire, 33 Eagle Street, Accrington, BB5 1LN
- **Wednesday, 18<sup>th</sup> March 2026**  
🕒 11:00 AM – 4:00 PM  
📍 Inspire, 33 Eagle Street, Accrington, BB5 1LN



### 4 - Hyndburn Cervical Screening



## Is your cervical screening test due or overdue?

(commonly known as a smear test)



The mobile cervical screening unit will be in **PENDLE WEST** at the following locations:

- **Thursday, 12<sup>th</sup> February 2026**  
🕒 11:00 AM – 4:00 PM  
📍 Morrisons, Pendle Street, Nelson, BB9 7UZ
- **Wednesday, 25<sup>th</sup> February 2026**  
🕒 11:00 AM – 4:00 PM  
📍 Morrisons, Pendle Street, Nelson, BB9 7UZ
- **Monday, 9<sup>th</sup> March 2026**  
🕒 11:00 AM – 4:00 PM  
📍 Brierfield Family Hub, Tunstall Square, Brierfield, Nelson, BB9 5GZ
- **Wednesday, 25<sup>th</sup> March 2026**  
🕒 11:00 AM – 4:00 PM  
📍 Morrisons, Pendle Street, Nelson, BB9 7UZ



### 5 - Pendle West Cervical Screening

## Meet the team





6 - image designed by AI copilot

**The Health Protection Team are getting out and about, speaking to local residents to raise awareness on the national screening and vaccination programmes available.**

*Keep an eye out - new locations are coming soon!*

**In next month's edition:-**

- Shingles
- Ticks

[Health Protection Archive: All Previous Issues in One Place](#)

Each month, we've shared updates, insights, and resources to support our work and keep everyone informed. Below, you'll find links to all past issues—feel free to revisit any that you may have missed or want to explore again.

[Heads Up From Health Protection Archives](#)

This information has been produced by the Health Protection Team at Lancashire County Council.

If you require a printable version of this Health Protection bulletin please email the team at [healthprotection@lancashire.gov.uk](mailto:healthprotection@lancashire.gov.uk)

(Information correct at February 2026)



The tiny pocket inside the front right pocket of your jeans was **originally designed in the 1800s to hold a pocket watch**. Levi Strauss added it for cowboys and workers who needed a safe place to store their watches!

Embed://<iframe width="640px" height="480px"  
src="https://forms.office.com/e/fAXnhiyji8?embed=true" frameborder="0"  
marginwidth="0" marginheight="0" style="border: none; max-width:100%; max-  
height:100vh" allowfullscreen webkitallowfullscreen mozallowfullscreen msallowfullscreen>  
</iframe>