



Diagnosing Sarcoma

A guide for GPs

All patients with imaging suggestive of sarcoma should be referred to a sarcoma specialist or the National Sarcoma MDT based at St Vincent's University Hospital (adults only) with a satellite MDT in Cork University Hospital. The SVUH-based online MDT referral form can be accessed at www.stvincentssarcomanetworkireland.com. Children should be referred to CHI at Crumlin.

What is sarcoma?

Sarcomas are cancers that develop in the supporting or connective tissues of the body such as muscle, bone, nerves, cartilage, blood vessels and fat. There are around 100 different subtypes of sarcoma, all of which can be grouped into two main types: soft tissue sarcomas and bone sarcomas. They can occur in any part of the body, but they most commonly present as a lump or pain around the bone.

Clinical presentations of soft tissue sarcoma:

- Lump more than 5cm or larger than a golf ball
- Lump increasing in size
- Deep to fascia, fixed or immobile
- Lump that is rapidly changing
- Recurrence after previous excision

Clinical presentations of bone sarcoma:

Unexplained bone pain or tenderness, which is:

- persistent
- increasing
- non-mechanical
- nocturnal or at rest

Investigations for soft tissue sarcoma:

1. Refer for urgent MRI (performed within 2 weeks for adults, or 48 hours for children)
2. If imaging is suggestive of a sarcoma, refer patients to a sarcoma specialist or the National Sarcoma MDT based at SVUH or the satellite MDT at CUH

Investigations for bone sarcoma:

1. Refer for urgent x-ray or MRI (performed within 2 weeks for adults, or 48 hours for children)
2. If imaging is suggestive of a sarcoma, refer adult patients to a sarcoma specialist or the National Sarcoma MDT based at SVUH or the satellite MDT at CUH. Children should be referred to CHI at Crumlin

Further information:

www.stvincentssarcomanetworkireland.com

Hazel Murray (Sarcoma ANP St Vincent's University Hospital): hmurray@svhg.ie

Una Hayden (Sarcoma ANP Tallaght University Hospital): una.hayden@tuh.ie

NICE recommendations for suspected sarcoma:

www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng12/chapter/Recommendations-organised-by-site-of-cancer#sarcomas

ESMO clinical practice guidelines:

<https://www.esmo.org/guidelines/guidelines-by-topic/sarcoma-and-gist>



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Early detection is critical

Early detection of a sarcoma by a GP can significantly impact the outcome. Unfortunately, delays in diagnosis are common, which can have severe consequences. For instance, an increase of one centimetre in the size of a primary sarcoma at diagnosis is associated with a three to five percent decrease in survival rates. Currently, only 55% of sarcoma patients survive beyond five years.

Soft Tissue Sarcomas

What to Look For

Soft tissue sarcomas are most often detected as painless or painful lumps. Although most lumps and bumps are not sarcomas, it is crucial to be aware of red flag signs indicating a need for further investigation, such as lumps that are growing, changing, larger than a golf ball, deep (reaching the fascia), increasing in size, painful, or recurring after removal.

Commonly affect the arms, legs, and trunk, with nearly half of all cases occurring in the limbs. Other frequent sites include the chest, abdomen, pelvis, stomach, intestines (GIST), retroperitoneal area, and female reproductive system (gynecological sarcomas).

Sarcoma Cancer Ireland

is a registered charity led by a volunteer group of sarcoma patients and carers.

We are committed to enhancing the lives of those impacted by sarcoma, offering support, education and advocacy to empower patients and their families in their fight against this rare cancer.

Bone Sarcomas

What to Look For

Patients with bone sarcomas may present with symptoms such as persistent bone pain, swelling, or a noticeable lump in the affected area. They may also experience limitations in joint mobility or difficulty bearing weight on the affected limb.

Bone sarcomas can occur at any age, and can be found in children, adolescents and young adults.

The most common types of bone sarcomas are osteosarcoma and Ewing sarcoma. These cancers can arise in any bone but are often found in the long bones of the arms and legs, such as the femur or tibia.

Services we offer:

- Patient and family support group
- Bereavement support group
- Financial aid grant

We receive no money from the Health Service or Irish government - all of our services are fully funded by donations from the public.

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