

## Sarcoma UK - Key facts and figures

Sarcomas are uncommon cancers that can affect any part of the body, on the inside or outside, including the muscle, bone, tendons, blood vessels and fatty tissues.

15 people are diagnosed with sarcoma every day in the UK. That's about 5300 people a year. There are around 100 different sub-types of sarcoma.

Sarcomas commonly affect the arms, legs and trunk. They also appear in the stomach and intestines as well as behind the abdomen (retroperitoneal sarcomas) and the female reproductive system (gynaecological sarcomas).

- Bone sarcomas affect about 611 people in the UK each year - 1 in 9 sarcoma diagnoses are bone sarcoma. Not all bone cancers will be sarcomas.
- Soft tissue sarcomas are the most common type of sarcoma; around 88% of sarcomas are a type of soft tissue sarcoma.

They can affect any part of the body; they develop in supporting or connective tissue such as the muscle, nerves, fatty tissue, and blood vessels. Soft tissue sarcomas include:

- GIST is a common type of soft tissue sarcoma; it develops in the gastrointestinal (GI) tract, a long tube running through the body from the oesophagus (gullet) to the anus (back passage) and includes the stomach and intestines.
- Gynaecological sarcomas (sometimes shortened to gynae sarcomas) occur in the female reproductive system: the uterus (womb), ovaries, vagina, vulva and fallopian tubes. You may also hear the term uterine sarcoma. They can affect women of any age.
- Retroperitoneal sarcomas occur in the retroperitoneum. This is an area behind the peritoneum, the lining of the abdominal space that covers the abdominal organs. The retroperitoneum is deep in the abdomen and pelvis, behind the abdominal lining, where organs such as the major blood vessels, kidneys, pancreas and bladder are located.

More research needs to be done to fully understand how these cancers develop and spread and how best to diagnose and treat them. People can survive sarcoma if their cancer is diagnosed early, when treatments can be effective and before the sarcoma has spread to other parts of the body. It is vital that patients be referred to a specialist sarcoma team as early as possible.

## Sarcoma facts and figures

Getting an accurate picture of the sarcoma landscape is important, which is why Sarcoma UK has collated the most recent sets of data and information from the four UK nations to get an updated snapshot of how sarcoma affects the UK.

## Incidence

- Sarcoma is more common than previously thought. In 2016 there were 5,240 people diagnosed with sarcoma cancer in the UK.
- There are three main types of sarcoma: soft tissue sarcoma, bone sarcoma and gastrointestinal stromal tumours (GIST).
- Sarcoma diagnoses now make up about 1.4% of all cancer diagnoses in the UK.
- In 2016, there were 611 cases of bone sarcoma diagnosed in the UK.
- 88% sarcomas diagnosed in the UK are soft tissue sarcomas.
- The majority (87%) of sarcoma cases are diagnosed in England.
- The majority of people are diagnosed when their sarcoma is about the size of a large tin of baked beans (10cm).

### Survival

- Sarcoma survival rates have been very gradually increasing over the last two decades in the UK.
- Almost eight in 10 people (78%) diagnosed with sarcoma in the UK will live up to a year.
- The average percentage of people living three years after being diagnosed with sarcoma in the UK is 64.5%.
- The five-year survival rate for sarcoma is 55%.

### Awareness of sarcoma

- Awareness of sarcoma is low in the UK. According to a YouGov poll conducted in April 2020, three quarters (75%) of people in the UK do not know or are not sure what sarcoma is.
- Less than a third (30%) of respondents identified sarcoma as a form of cancer.
- There is a large disparity in numbers between people who feel they know of sarcoma to any degree (65%, 1301 out of 2007 people) and those that actually understand what this cancer is.
- Even for those who have heard of sarcoma understanding of its symptoms is poor. Nearly a third (29%) had no idea of what the symptoms of sarcoma are and less than half could identify the key symptoms of a painful lump growing in size (47%) and bone pain (46%).