
Your Symptoms Matter



Volunteer Training Resources for Verspeeten Family Cancer Centre

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Verspeeten YSM/Kiosk Contact Information

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Your Symptoms Matter



What is Your Symptom Matter?

- *Your Symptoms Matter* (YSM) is the name for the symptom screening tools used at regional cancer centres through Ontario Health Cancer Care Ontario (OH-CCO).
- It allows patients to self-report their symptoms, and helping the healthcare team to:
 - Identify symptoms that matter most to the patient
 - Support the development of personalized care plans to help the patient feel better
 - Ensure patients receive the right information and resources to manage their symptoms effectively.

Your Symptoms Matter

Tell us how you are feeling today

Your *Symptoms Matter* is a symptom screening tool that asks about common cancer symptoms such as pain, fatigue, and anxiety. It takes less than 5 minutes to complete.

Responding to *Your Symptoms Matter* can help your healthcare team know when you have symptoms that need support.

Talk to your healthcare team about the symptoms that matter most to you, and work together on a plan to manage them.

Scan to fill out
Your Symptoms Matter

Ask a staff member or volunteer to learn more
cancercareontario.ca/ysm

Read this information in an accessible format
1-877-968-8383 | 1-800-368-6777 | www.ohccco.ca | www.ontariohealth.ca

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Screening Tools

- Patients can complete YSM before at home, or while they wait for their in-person, phone or video appointments.
- The tools are available online using a smart phone, computer, or iPad/tablet, or in person at the Cancer Centre using a computer kiosk or iPad.
- **Available Screening Tools Include:**
 - *General Symptoms + (Edmonton Symptom Assessment System – Revised Plus, ESAS-r +)*
 - *Prostate Cancer (Expanded Prostate Cancer Index Composite, EPIC)*
 - *Daily Activities (Patient-Reported Functional Status, PFRS)*
 - *MDASI-HN (MD Anderson Symptom Inventory – Head & Neck Module)*



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Why Symptom Screening Matters

- Cancer patients can experience many symptoms related to their cancer, that can have a significant impact on their quality of life
- Symptom screening is an important way for patients to communicate how they are feeling to their healthcare team
- Symptom screening tools are created based on scientific evidence that enables patients to rate their symptom severity across common cancer symptoms
- Symptom screening can help patients:
 - Communicate about their symptoms with their healthcare team
 - Let their healthcare team know when they have symptoms that need urgent support
 - Create a plan with their healthcare team to manage their symptoms
 - Monitor the changes in their symptoms over time

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The Value of Symptom Screening in Cancer Care

Benefits for the Healthcare Team:

- **Early Detection & Treatment:** By screening regularly, teams can detect symptom changes early, use the appropriate assessment tools to explore concerns, and tailor care—helping to reduce avoidable ED visits and hospitalizations.
- **Patient-Centered Communication:** Focus on the symptoms that matter most to the patient, using simple tools that allow them to report symptoms independently, online, at home, or in clinic, without bias.
- **Supports Interdisciplinary Collaboration:** The information is sent directly to the patient's electronic medical record, enabling staff to quickly identify when a patient is struggling, which helps guide targeted support and timely intervention. All team members can access the scores within Cerner.
- **Additional Insights:** Capture symptom insights beyond standard clinical assessments, supporting decision-makers and quality improvement committees in critically evaluating clinical care.

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Collaboration for Effective Symptom Screening

- **Teamwork is Key:** All healthcare team members must collaborate to ensure patients are supported in completing their symptom screening.
- **Patient Understanding:** Help patients understand the importance of completing the screening and how it benefits their care.
- **Clear Communication:** Ensure patients are aware of how their symptom information will be used to improve their treatment and support.
- **Consistent Support:** Provide continuous guidance and education throughout the patient's journey to reduce barriers and enhance patient confidence in the YSM program.

Patient arrives in waiting room (after registration and check-in)



Clerk directs Patient to computer kiosk, Home Channel QR Code, or Volunteer led mobile iPad



Patient fills out YSM survey on the preferred device with Volunteer support



Volunteer sanitizes the kiosk and iPad



Nurse to view scores in Cerner, acknowledges YSM scores, completes health assessment, and provides support and resources

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Verspeeten Family Cancer Centre Roles & Responsibilities

- **Clerical:** Encourage patient completion and introduce patients to a volunteer
- **Radiation Therapists:** Encourage patient completion and Use Scores in assessments
- **Psychosocial Oncology Providers:** Encourage patient completion
- **Volunteers:** introduce *Your Symptoms Matter*, and guide them through the iPad, kiosk or Home Channel process
- **Nursing:** Use Scores in assessments and guide patient care
- **Health Disciplines:** Use symptom screening scores to flag symptoms relevant to scope of practice and incorporate into care discussions
- **Physicians:** Integrate YSM data into symptom management, patient education, and documentation

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How Patients are Directed to Complete Your Symptoms Matter

- Patients check in with the clinic reception, complete their bloodwork and are directed to the volunteer at the kiosks, if they haven't completed Your Symptoms Matter prior to their arrival to the Cancer Centre
- Greet patients by the kiosk or provide an iPad and introduce Your Symptoms Matter
 - Example: "Your Symptoms Matter helps your health care team know how you are doing at every appointment"
- Patients will swipe their health card at the kiosk or enter it into the iPad or smart phone (Home Channel) and be directed to the appropriate assessment.
- Kiosks are located around the corner from New Patient Referral, Clinic 1, Clinic 2, Clinic 3, Clinic 4/Pharmacy, Radiation Patient Review and Baines (3rd floor)

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- If you need a 'test' number to work with enter: aaaaaaaaaa (10 a's)
- For many patients this will be the first time they see or use a touch screen computer. Welcome them to the kiosk.
- The first training session for the kiosk will take approximately 10 to 15 minutes.
- Some patients may need continued help with the screen at return appointments but this should take less time.

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- When logging into **Your Symptoms Matter**, patients will have the option to complete the following assessments:
 - *General Symptoms +* (Edmonton Symptom Assessment System – Revised Plus, ESAS-r +)
 - *Prostate Cancer* (Expanded Prostate Cancer Index Composite, EPIC)
 - *Daily Activities* (Patient-Reported Functional Status, PFRS)
 - *MDASI-HN (MD Anderson Symptom Inventory – Head & Neck Module)*

- There is logic built-in that will help select the appropriate questionnaire for patients

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Using Symptom Screening Data to Improve Cancer Care

- **Enhance Clinical Decisions:** Identify critical symptoms early for timely interventions and more targeted care.
- **Track Outcomes:** Monitor symptom trends across disease sites, providers, and treatment modalities to identify improvement areas.
- **Improve Screening Rates:** Increasing screening rates will provide better data, improving workflows and supporting clinical decision-making.
- **Promote Curiosity:** Encourage questions about symptom burden and how it impacts patient care and treatment outcomes.
- **Provincial and Local Impact:**
 - **Provincial:** Ontario Health Cancer Care Ontario (OH-CCO) uses this data to improve cancer care across the province.
 - **Local:** At the Verspeeten Family Cancer Centre, we aim to analyze trends to improve care, inform staff training, and refine supportive care practices.

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Addressing Myths and Concerns

- **Myth:** "It's just another checkbox exercise"
- **Fact:** Data informs personalized care and treatment adjustments.

- **Myth:** "It takes too much time"
- **Fact:** Streamlines symptom discussions, saving time. Helps identify patients primary concern – most meaningful to the patient at that point in time

- **Myth:** "Patients don't like it"
- **Fact:** High patient completion rates; they feel heard

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Your Symptoms Matter – General Symptoms

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- Most patients will complete [Your Symptoms Matter – General Symptoms](#)
- There are **12 multiple choice questions** with each symptom rated on a scale of “0 to 10”
 - ESAS r+ added 3 new questions regarding sleeping, diarrhea and constipation
 - A score of “**0**” means you do not have the symptom, whereas a score of “**10**” means that your symptom is at its very worst
 - It is important that patients answer the questions based on **their own perspective**. Please refrain from offering your own viewpoint or sharing personal experiences. Additionally, family members should not prompt the patient on how to rank their responses.
- The General Symptoms assessment is available in 5 other languages electronically.
- Remind patients that once they submit their YSM, it is immediately added to their medical record and can be viewed by the health care provider in the exam room.

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Your Symptoms Matter – Prostate Cancer

ALSO KNOWN AS EPIC



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- Cancer Care Ontario (CCO) introduced a disease-specific assessment for patients with **prostate cancer** called Your Symptoms Matter – Prostate Cancer. Also known as “EPIC”
- This disease-specific assessment was introduced in response to **patient feedback**
- Patient’s provided feedback that completing the assessment would be **more valuable if the questions were specific** to their type of cancer
- EPIC is the **first assessment tailored to a specific type of cancer**. The goal is that additional assessments, specific to other types of cancer, will be introduced in the future.

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Your Symptoms Matter – Prostate Cancer

- Through the self-selection questions described previously, men with early-stage prostate cancer will be selected to complete the **Your Symptoms Matter – Prostate Cancer** assessment
 - There are a total of **17 multiple choice questions** with four or five possible answers
- The assessment discusses symptoms in the following domains:
 - Bowel symptoms
 - Urinary irritation/obstruction symptoms
 - Urinary incontinence symptoms
 - Vitality/hormone symptoms
 - Sexual function symptoms

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Sensitive nature of some questions Your Symptoms Matter – Prostate Cancer

- Since the Prostate Cancer assessment addresses **sensitive topics** like sexual function and vitality/hormone symptoms, it is important to be aware of the content of these questions.
- It is also important for you to know that patients should be familiar with these types of questions prior to their clinic visit
- Patients may also feel uncomfortable asking questions or answering in front of you
- These questions cover topics such as:
 - Orgasms
 - Erections
 - Hot flashes
 - Urinary incontinence

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Sensitive nature of some questions

Your Symptoms Matter – Prostate Cancer

- Tips about assisting patients with the Your Symptoms Matter – Prostate Cancer assessment:
 - Do not read the question or responses out loud
 - Bring the patient aside to explain what the question is asking (if space permits)
 - Encourage patients to ask questions of their health care provider
If a patient is uncomfortable or unsure about answering the questions, they can complete the symptom screening in the clinic appointment
 - Step aside once the patient has begun the survey to provide them with privacy



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Screenshots: Your Symptoms Matter – Prostate Cancer

Example of question

Please note, should patients realize they have selected the wrong questionnaire, the **“Start Over”** button is available with all questions.

Ontario Health | Your Symptoms Matter - Prostate | Français | Quit

Progress: 40 %

Start Over

Urinary frequency
How big a problem, if any, has need to urinate frequently been for you in the **LAST FOUR WEEKS?**

No problem
Very small problem
Small problem
Moderate problem
Big problem

Question 7 of 17 | Go Back | Continue

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Your Symptoms Matter – Daily Functions

ALSO KNOWN AS pECOG/PRFS



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Your Symptoms Matter – Daily Activities

- All patients will be asked to complete **Your Symptoms Matter – Daily Activities**
- This assessment will be probed at the end of **Your Symptoms Matter – General Symptoms** and **Your Symptoms Matter – Prostate Cancer**
- This assessment consists of one question and asks patients to rate their daily functions and activity levels

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Your Symptoms Matter – Daily Activities Question

 Ontario Health | Your Symptoms Matter Français Quit

Progress : 93 %

Activities & Function:
Over the past month I would generally rate my activity as:

0 - Normal with no limitations

1 - Not my normal self, but able to be up and about with fairly normal activities

2 - Not feeling up to most things, but in bed or chair less than half the day

3 - Able to do little activity & spend most of the day in bed or chair

4 - Pretty much bedridden, rarely out of bed

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Your Symptoms Matter – Head & Neck Cancer

ALSO KNOWN AS MDASI-HN



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Your Symptoms Matter – Head & Neck Cancer

- **MDASI-HN** (MD Anderson Symptom Inventory – Head & Neck Module) is a patient-reported outcome measure (PROM) used to assess symptom severity and symptom interference in head and neck cancer patients.
- **What Questions Are Asked? Patients rate symptoms on a 0–10 scale. The tool includes:**
 - Core symptoms (e.g., pain, fatigue, nausea),
 - Head & neck–specific symptoms (e.g., swallowing difficulty, dry mouth, voice changes)
 - Symptom interference with daily life (activity, mood, work, enjoyment of life)

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Ensuring Privacy

- The kiosks are equipped with privacy screens to ensure no one around can view the responses
- Avoid situations of reading questions or responses out loud
- It is important to be mindful that patients may feel uncomfortable having anyone close by while filling in the assessment. Let them know you are there if they would like any help and stand away to the side.
- Patients have the option to complete symptom screening in their clinic appointments if they are unable to complete it prior.
- Patients have the option of completing the screening on their own device; either at home or in the waiting room.
- It can be completed by QR code or by URL [Your Symptoms Matter - Start \(ontariohealth.ca\)](https://ontariohealth.ca/YourSymptomsMatter-Start)

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Thank you for all that you do!

If you have any questions, please do not
hesitate to reach out to any of the
contacts listed on Slide 2.