

Do not ignore these symptoms!

by Dr. Delia Chiamonte, [Baltimore Health Examiner](#)



Some symptoms should not be ignored. Most people know to go to the ER for chest pain and in a recent blog I discussed the symptoms of stroke. But there are some symptoms that people routinely ignore – sometimes with devastating consequences.

Bleeding from the nipple is one of those symptoms. Most women would be alarmed to see a bloody nipple discharge, but not all of them would rush to the doctor's office. If the symptom disappeared, it might simply be forgotten. The problem is, bloody nipple discharge can be the first sign of a hidden breast cancer, so a significant delay in evaluation can be life-threatening.

An even more common, yet often ignored, symptom is increased menstrual bleeding in a woman who is 35 or older. While there are many benign causes of irregular and heavy periods, in this population they can be a sign of uterine (aka endometrial) cancer. So if you are over 35 and your periods become heavier or more frequent than they had been in the past, you should talk to your gynecologist about checking the inside of your uterus for polyps or cancer. If you have already been through menopause and then start bleeding again, run, don't walk, to your doctor for an evaluation.

Colon cancer also occasionally gives hints that its victims ignore. Rectal bleeding, even small amounts, can be from an unsuspected cancer in the large intestine and needs to be evaluated. I have seen people in their 20s with colon cancer, so don't ignore your rectal bleeding even if you think you are too young to worry about it.

The basic lesson is this: if you see blood in a place that you shouldn't, take note. Cancers sometimes announce their presence with blood and it is up to you to pay attention. A trip to the doctor may be inconvenient, or even embarrassing, but if it results in an early

diagnosis of cancer, one that is small enough to be cured, you will never regret the decision.

-Dr. C.

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