

Dear Clinicians

Unintentional weight loss is a frequent, vague symptom that can have several aetiologies. Malignancy is one of these explanations, but it's probably the one that worries patients and medical professionals the most.

Here in the Countess of Chester radiology department, we are aware of the necessity of a comprehensive approach and the part that clinical radiology plays in the investigation of clinically significant weight loss (defined as a loss of more than 5% of body weight).

After reviewing the literature and conducting a local audit we established a simple straightforward pathway for imaging investigation of unintentional weight loss with *no other significant symptoms* and *negative clinical history of malignancy*. This is based on basic radiological examinations, namely chest radiograph and ultrasound of the abdomen and pelvis, as there is no evidence in the literature that supports the use of CT of thorax, abdomen, and pelvis as a first line radiological examination in initial stage of work up.

As you can see, the method does acknowledge the limitations of ultrasound in some patients and allows for CT abdomen in such situations once the patient is evaluated by the baseline ultrasound.

While preserving the evidence-based treatment we provide to our patients, we predict that this pathway will maximise resource use and minimise unnecessary radiation.

Yours sincerely

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Please see chart below.

**Imaging Pathway for Unintentional Weight Loss\*, \*\***



\* This imaging pathway is meant for requests citing unintentional/unexplained weight loss (UIWL) without other significant clinical symptoms e.g. palpable mass, vomiting, PR bleeding, laboratory abnormality…etc

\*\*This is an imaging pathway for initial radiological work up in cases of unintentional weight loss.

Resources:

[https://bestpractice.bmj.com/topics/en-gb/548?q=Unintentional](https://gbr01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fbestpractice.bmj.com%2Ftopics%2Fen-gb%2F548%3Fq%3DUnintentional&data=05%7C01%7Cclaire.gordon11%40nhs.net%7Cca8eb43b6f25420ae13808db8f71290d%7C37c354b285b047f5b22207b48d774ee3%7C0%7C0%7C638261488395842853%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=oVAL69bVmd4CR%2Fq4e7%2Fst0fJbrfhM%2F1M1eUFpmT7UfY%3D&reserved=0) weight loss (assessment of)&c=suggested

<https://www.uptodate.com/contents/approach-to-the-patient-with-unintentional-weight-loss?search=unintentional%20weight%20loss&source=search_result&selectedTitle=1~150&usage_type=default&display_rank=1#H88396571>