

# Bowel health and the bowel screening test in Scotland



## About this booklet



This booklet tells you how to

- Do the bowel screening test at home
- Keep your bowel healthy

When you get your bowel screening test you can choose if you want to do it or not. This booklet is to help you decide.

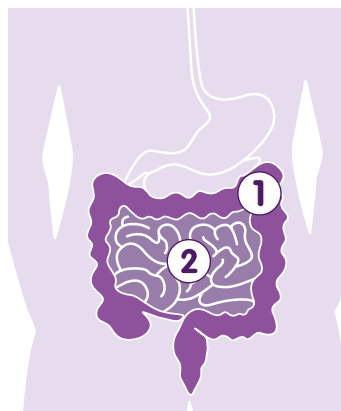
## What is your bowel?



Your bowel is inside your body.

It is in between your tummy and your bottom.

It takes away the waste that your body does not need.



This waste comes out of your body as poo when you go to the toilet.

1. Large bowel
2. Small bowel

## Why the test is important



Some people get a disease in their bowel called bowel cancer.

The test takes a look for small amounts of blood in your poo that you cannot see.

The test could help save your life as it can find bowel cancer at a very early stage.

If bowel cancer is found early you have a good chance of getting better.

## About the test



When you are **50** years old, the NHS will send you a bowel screening test to do at home.

The test will be posted to you every 2 years until you are **74**.



After you turn **75** years old, you can still get a bowel screening test every 2 years by calling this helpline number:

**0800 0121 833**

(textphone 18001 0800 0121 833)

## What you will be sent



NHS Scotland will send you:

- A test kit
- A letter and leaflet telling you how to do the test
- A freepost envelope

The letter about the test will have a sticky label on the front.

Read all the information before you start to do the test. You can get help from the free NHS Scotland bowel screening helpline number:

**0800 0121 833** (textphone 18001 0800 0121 833)

Or talk to someone you trust like a support worker, family member or friend.

## Getting ready



For the test, you need to take just **1 small sample** of poo.

On the day you are taking a sample of poo, write the date on the test.



Peel off the label from the letter that arrives with the test.



The side for the label is marked with a +.



Stick the label on the side of the test marked with the +.



## Getting ready



**Before** taking the test, decide how you are going to collect a sample of poo.

Some things you can use to catch your poo are:

- Toilet paper, tissue or kitchen roll you have put on your hand
- A small, clean plastic bag you have put on your hand
- A paper plate
- A clean empty carton, like a margarine tub or an ice cream pot

If you decide to use an empty carton, it must be one that you can throw away afterwards.

Put some toilet paper inside the carton you use before collecting the poo.

This makes it easier to empty it into the toilet when you are finished.

Before you go to the toilet, take the test kit, instructions and what you need to catch your poo into the bathroom.

## Doing the test



When you have collected the poo, open the test kit by **twisting** the top round.

A stick is attached to the top.

Take the sample by scraping the end of the stick on the poo.

Only a small amount of poo is needed.

Make sure the two holes at the end of the stick are covered in poo.



## How to close the test



Close the test straight after taking your sample by putting the stick back into the test and **twisting** the top round.

Do not reopen the test.



If you have any questions after doing the test or think you have made a mistake you can get help from the free NHS Scotland bowel screening helpline number:

**0800 0121 833**

(textphone 18001 0800 0121 833)

## Cleaning up



Tip the poo and any toilet paper carefully into the toilet. Flush the toilet.



Put the carton or anything else used to catch the poo into a bag and then bin it.

Do not use the carton for anything else.



Wash your hands.

## What to do before you send the test kit back

When you have taken a sample, send the test back as soon as possible. Make sure you follow these steps.



### Step 1

Check that you have closed the test. The top should be twisted round securely.



### Step 2

Make sure you have stuck the label from your NHS letter to your test.



### Step 3

On the other side of the test, check you have written the date you took the poo sample.

### Step 4

Put your test in the envelope. Take off the white strip of paper and stick the envelope down so it is sealed.



### Step 5

You do not need to put a stamp on the envelope.

Put it in the post box after you have sealed it.

## What happens next



You will be sent a letter with the results of the test within 14 days.

If everything looks OK then you will not have to do the test again for 2 years.



If there is blood in your poo then you might need to go to hospital for more tests.

A doctor or nurse will talk to you about any tests.



If you are worried about anything to do with the test, call this helpline number:

**0800 0121 833**

(textphone 18001 0800 0121 833)

## Checking your bowel is healthy



The bowel screening test looks for small amounts of blood in your poo that you cannot see. The test helps to find cancer at an early stage but it is not perfect.

If you feel unwell or things just don't feel right, it is important to see your GP. Page 14 tells you about what to look out for.

## Keeping your bowel healthy



You can keep your bowel healthy by:



Eating 5 pieces of fruit and vegetables every day.



Eating food that has fibre in it – for example brown bread, brown rice, or porridge.



Drinking 6 to 8 glasses of water every day.



Keeping to a healthy weight.

Being more active in everyday life, this includes walking more and sitting less.

## Some things are unhealthy for your bowel



Eating processed meat like ham, sausages, bacon and burgers



Eating a lot of red meat like beef, lamb or pork



Drinking a lot of alcohol



Smoking



For more information on taking care of your bowel read the booklet:  
**Keeping your bowel healthy – easy read**



## When should I go to the GP



You should go to your GP if

- You see any blood in the toilet, from your bottom or in your poo
- Your poo is runny and this is not normal for you
- You stop having poos and this is not normal for you
- You start to get very bad tummy pains
- You can feel lumps in your tummy
- You lose a lot of weight without going on a diet
- You feel tired all the time



See your GP if you notice one or more of the things listed above.

Most of the time these symptoms are not bowel cancer. But it is important to tell your GP so you can get checked out.

You or someone you trust can make an appointment with your GP.

## Where to go to find out more



For help or more information on the test you can contact the **Scottish Bowel Screening Centre**.

Call this helpline number: **0800 0121 833**  
(textphone 18001 0800 0121 833)

Or email: **bowelscreening.tayside@nhs.net**

Or visit this website:

**[www.nhsinform.scot/bowelscreening](http://www.nhsinform.scot/bowelscreening)**



The helpline staff will be happy to help you and answer any questions about the test.

You can also talk to:

- Someone you trust like a support worker, family member or friend
- Your nurse or GP



Bowel Cancer UK is the UK's leading bowel cancer research charity. We are determined to save lives and improve the quality of life for all those affected by bowel cancer.

We support and enable research, educate patients, public and professionals about bowel cancer and campaign for early diagnosis and best treatment and care for all those affected.

**Find out more at [bowelcanceruk.org.uk](http://bowelcanceruk.org.uk)**

 /charitybcuk

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To find out more about this booklet or tell us what you think email [feedback@bowelcanceruk.org.uk](mailto:feedback@bowelcanceruk.org.uk)

