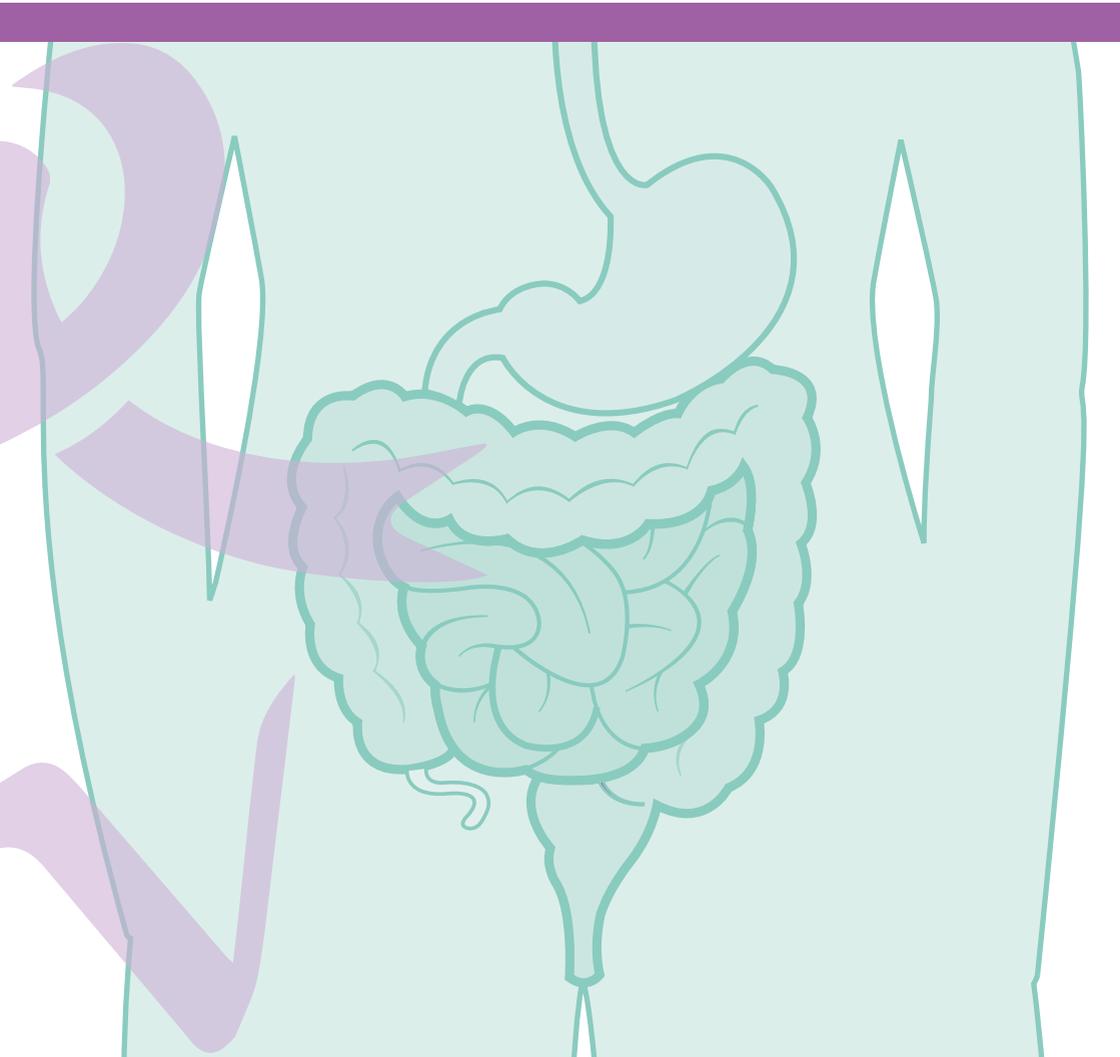


What is bowel cancer?

What it is, who's at risk and what to look out for



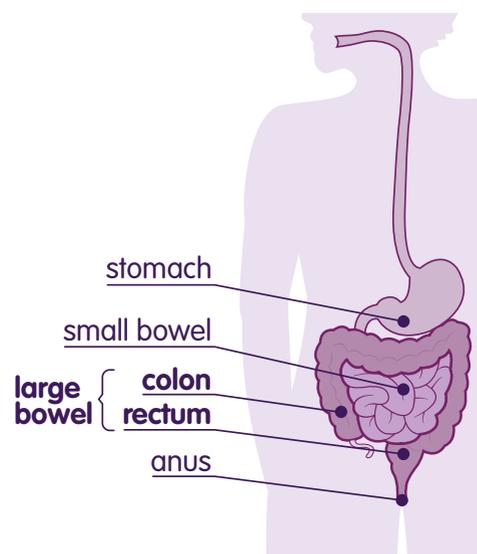
Bowel cancer is the fourth most common cancer in the UK and the second biggest cancer killer. Every year over 41,000 people are diagnosed with the disease. However, it is treatable and curable, especially if diagnosed early.

Nearly everyone diagnosed at the earliest stage will survive bowel cancer for at least five years, but this drops significantly as the disease develops.



The bowel

The bowel is part of the digestive system. Bowel cancer (also known as colorectal cancer) occurs in the large bowel, which is made up of the colon and rectum.



What is bowel cancer?

Most bowel cancers develop from pre-cancerous growths, called polyps. But not all polyps will develop into cancer. Most people won't know they have polyps, as they don't normally cause any symptoms.

Larger polyps can sometimes cause symptoms like bleeding from your bottom and/or blood in your poo, a production of mucus when you go to the toilet, diarrhoea or constipation and tummy pain. You should visit your GP if you are worried about any symptoms.

Polyps are usually found during an examination of the inside of the bowel or as part of the bowel cancer screening programme. If your doctor finds any polyps, he or she can remove them to lower the risk of bowel cancer developing.

Who is at risk?

You are more at risk of getting bowel cancer if you have one or more of the following risk factors:

- Are 50 or over – the risk of bowel cancer increases with age, but it can affect people of any age
- A strong family history of bowel cancer
- A history of non-cancerous growths (polyps) in your bowel
- Longstanding inflammatory bowel disease such as Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis
- Type 2 diabetes
- An unhealthy lifestyle – your diet, drinking alcohol, smoking and not being physically active can all increase your risk

Having risk factors doesn't mean that you will definitely get bowel cancer. Equally, if you don't have any risk factors, it doesn't mean you won't get bowel cancer.

Bowel cancer screening

If you are aged 60-74 (50-74 in Scotland) and registered with your GP you will receive an NHS screening test in the post every two years.

Screening can detect tiny amounts of blood in poo, which can't normally be seen. Bowel cancer screening could save your life.

For more information call the bowel screening helpline for your country:

- England: 0800 707 6060
- Scotland: 0800 0121 833
- Wales: 0800 294 3370
- Northern Ireland: 0800 015 2514

Symptoms to look out for

The symptoms of bowel cancer can include:

- Bleeding from your bottom and/or blood in your poo
- 3+** A change in bowel habit lasting three weeks or more
- Extreme tiredness for no obvious reason
- A pain or lump in your tummy
- Unexplained weight loss

Most people with these symptoms don't have bowel cancer. Other health problems can cause similar symptoms. But if you have one or more of these, or if things just don't feel right, visit your GP.

Our website has more information about what to expect when you visit your GP. Don't worry about wasting their time. If you are worried that something is wrong, they will want to see you. Your GP may be able to put your mind at rest. If you do have a medical problem, the earlier you get a diagnosis, the better the chance of successful treatment and cure.

Find out more about bowel cancer at bowelcanceruk.org.uk

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

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To find out more about this booklet or tell us what you think email feedback@bowelcanceruk.org.uk



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