

Bowel health and the home test kit



The NHS Bowel Cancer Screening Programme
for people who are 60 years old and over



Who we are and what we do



We are Bowel Cancer UK.
We are a charity.



This booklet tells you how to

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



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

Bowel screening helps to find bowel cancer at a very early stage.



This means you have a good chance of getting better.

The bowel screening test



When you are **60** years old, you will be sent a bowel screening home test kit.

You will get this every 2 years until you are **74**.



If you are **75** or older, you can also get a home test kit.

Please call this number to ask for your kit.

0800 707 6060

What is your bowel



The bowel is inside your body, in the part you know as your tummy.

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.

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
- Doing some exercise every day.



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



- Being very overweight and doing no exercise

- Drinking a lot of alcohol



- Smoking.

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.



These symptoms do not mean you have bowel cancer. But it is always good to ask your GP so you can get checked out.

About the test kit



The NHS will send you a bowel screening test to do at home.

They will send

- A letter about the test
- A leaflet telling you how to do it
- Cardboard sticks.



Read all the information before you start to do the test. Or you can ask someone you know to help.



You can get help from the free NHS bowel screening helpline number.

0800 707 6060

How to use the home test kit



For this test, you need to catch 3 different samples of poo.

Try not to get wee on the poo sample or the test might not work.



You can catch your poo in

- A clean empty carton, like a margarine pot or an ice cream tub
- On a paper plate
- In a child's potty
- A plastic bag you have put on your hand
- Toilet paper or tissue.



How to use the home test kit



Take the kit and the cardboard sticks into the bathroom.



Catch your poo before it goes into the toilet water.



Put toilet paper inside the pot you use to collect the poo.

This makes it easier to empty it into the toilet.

How to take the sample



Wait until you feel like having a poo.

Write the date on the first flap.



Hold the pot or paper near to your bottom.

Catch the poo in the container.

Put the container in a safe place in the bathroom.



Take one of the sticks and put it into the poo.

Smear some of the poo into the first box.

How to take the sample



Wrap the stick carefully in toilet paper and put it in the bin.



Use the second stick to take another small bit of poo from a different part of the poo.

Smear this poo into the second box.

Wrap the stick in toilet paper and put it in the bin.



Close the flap on the sample sheet and tuck the tab under the flap.

This will keep it shut.

How to take the sample



Put the card in a safe place until you need to use it again for your next sample. This could be on top of the bathroom cabinet.



Tip the poo carefully into the toilet. Wash or throw away the pot you have used. Do not use it for anything else.



Wash your hands!

Taking more poo samples



You will need to take 2 more poo samples.

You have to smear them into the flaps like you did the first time.



Do not take more than 14 days to do the samples or the tests might not work.

Use the calendar at the back of this booklet to help you.



You could write this on your calendar or put a reminder in your mobile phone.

Make a mark on the calendar when you have done each test.



Make sure you clear up and wash your hands every time you take a poo sample.

What to do before you send the kit back



When you have taken all 3 samples, you can send the kit back. Make sure you follow these steps.

Step 1

Make sure you have written the dates you took the poo samples on all 3 flaps.



Step 2

Check there are poo samples under each flap. There should be 6 poo samples altogether – 2 for each time you tested your poo.



Step 3

Put your kit in the envelope. It is lined with foil. Take off the white strip of paper and stick the envelope down so it is sealed.



Step 4

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 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 your sample is not clear then you might need to do the test again.

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

One of these tests is called a colonoscopy. 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 707 6060

Where to go to find out more



You can visit our website

bowelcanceruk.org.uk/screening



You can tell us what you think about our booklet

feedback@bowelcanceruk.org.uk



You can also find out more here

nhs.uk/conditions/bowel-cancer-screening

Your two week calendar

Use the calendar to fill in the dates you took your samples.

Week one
Monday
Tuesday
Wednesday
Thursday
Friday
Saturday
Sunday

Week two
Monday
Tuesday
Wednesday
Thursday
Friday
Saturday
Sunday

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

