

Bowel cancer screening

A guide to the NHS bowel cancer screening programme in England



What is bowel cancer screening?

Bowel cancer screening uses a simple test to look for signs of bowel cancer or polyps (non-cancerous growths). Screening can detect tiny amounts of blood in poo, which can't normally be seen.

Bowel cancer screening is for people with no symptoms.

Screening looks for signs of bowel cancer before symptoms appear.

What does the test involve?

The test will be posted to you, so you can do it in the privacy of your own home. Using the cardboard sticks provided, you will be asked to smear two small samples of poo onto a special screening card. You will need to do this three times over a two week period.

You will be given a self-sealing, freepost envelope to send the card back to the screening centre. Full instructions and a more detailed information leaflet will be sent to you with your invitation and test.

For more information call the bowel screening helpline on 0800 707 6060.

Why is it important?

Bowel cancer is the second biggest cancer killer in the UK, but it is treatable and curable, especially if it's diagnosed early. Screening aims to detect bowel cancer at an early stage, when treatment has the best chance of working. The test can also find polyps (non-cancerous growths), which might develop into cancer. Polyps can easily be removed, to lower the risk of bowel cancer.

Bowel cancer screening saves lives.

If bowel cancer is diagnosed at the earliest stage, nearly everyone will be successfully treated.

Who can take part?

If you are 60–74 you will receive a screening test in the post every two years. If you are 75 or over you can request a screening test by calling **0800 707 6060**. Whatever your age, if you are worried about any symptoms you should visit your GP.



What happens after the test?

You will usually get the results of your test within two weeks.

Most people have a normal result. If this happens you won't need any more tests, but you should still see your GP if you have any symptoms. You will be sent the screening test again in two years.

If the results aren't clear, you will be asked to do the test again.

If blood is found in your poo, you will be offered more tests to take a closer look. This doesn't mean you definitely have cancer. Blood could be caused by a non-cancerous polyp or another health problem.

Even after a normal result, it is important that anyone worried about symptoms speaks to their GP.

Symptoms include:

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

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 leaflet or tell us what you think email feedback@bowelcanceruk.org.uk

