

## Bowel Cancer

Awareness, prevention and support



### What is bowel cancer?

Bowel cancer is cancer found anywhere in the large bowel which includes the colon and rectum, sometimes also called colorectal cancer.

### How common is bowel cancer?

Bowel cancer is the fourth most common cancer in the UK, around 44,000 people are diagnosed every year and the second biggest cause of cancer death. However, survival rates have more than doubled in the last 40 years, largely due to earlier diagnosis and improved treatment.

### What causes bowel cancer?

It's not always known what causes bowel cancer and there are some risk factors you can't change, such as getting older, your family history, or a personal history of polyps or inflammatory bowel disease. Others are linked to lifestyle and can be influenced, including diet, physical activity, smoking and alcohol consumption.

### Who can get bowel cancer?

Slightly more men than women develop bowel cancer, and, while most of those diagnosed are older, bowel cancer rates in younger adults are rising. If you have a family history of bowel cancer, your risk is higher, however, only 5–10% of bowel cancer cases are thought to be inherited.

## How preventable is bowel cancer?

Scientists believe around 54% of bowel cancers could be prevented by lifestyle choices. This includes limiting intake of red meat to three or fewer portions a week, and eating very little, if any, processed meat. It's also important to get enough fibre, maintain a healthy weight, get plenty of physical activity and not smoke.

## Why is bowel screening important?

Bowel screening is designed to detect bowel cancer when it is at an early stage in people with no symptoms. The majority of bowel cancer cases can be successfully treated if they are found early, which is why it's so important to take part in bowel cancer screening whenever you are invited.

## Who is eligible for bowel screening?

Bowel screening starts at age 50 in England, Scotland and Wales, and 60 in Northern Ireland. The screening test is designed for people with no symptoms.

# 47–48%

of people aged 55+ are worried about getting bowel cancer.

# 59%

of men and 68% of women aged 55+ think they are eligible for bowel screening.

# 35–40%

say they would be more likely to take part in screening with virtual support.

## How is bowel screening offered?

- Eligible people are automatically sent a home testing kit every two years
- The test kit includes a sample bottle, an envelope, and instructions on how to do the test
- You collect a small sample of poo and send it by post to be tested
- Your sample will be tested for traces of blood, which could be an early sign of bowel cancer.

You can call the NHS bowel screening helpline on 0800 707 6060 for more information and for help ordering and using a test.



# What happens after bowel screening?



The results are usually sent in the NHS app or by letter. Some people may be asked to call their GP for the results. There are two possible results:

01

## No blood in your poo

Most people get this result and will be sent another test in two years. However, this result is not a guarantee that you do not have bowel cancer. See a GP if you have or get the symptoms of bowel cancer listed below.

02

## Blood in your poo

If blood was found in your poo you will need further tests. This does not mean you have cancer. Blood in your poo can be caused by other medical conditions like haemorrhoids. You will usually need to have a test that looks at your large bowel called a colonoscopy.

If your bowel screening results are taking longer than expected, that does not mean anything is wrong.

## What signs or symptoms should people be aware of?

Talk to your GP if you experience any of the following symptoms:

- Bleeding from your bottom and/or blood in your poo
- A persistent and unexplained change in bowel habit
- Unexplained weight loss
- Extreme tiredness for no obvious reason
- Pain or a lump in your tummy

## Do these symptoms mean someone definitely has bowel cancer?

No. Some of these symptoms are common and can be caused by conditions other than bowel cancer but it's important to get them checked by your GP.

**Whole Human Cancer Care, from Risk to Recovery.**

Contact us to find out more [hello@percihealth.com](mailto:hello@percihealth.com) or visit [percihealth.com](https://percihealth.com)