

Spot bowel cancer early



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Together we will beat cancer

Take charge

If you want to know more about **spotting the signs of bowel cancer**, this leaflet is for you.

You can find out about:

- bowel cancer signs and symptoms
- tips for talking to your doctor
- steps to reduce your risk
- information about bowel cancer screening

When it comes to your health, remember you're in charge.

Cancer is much more common in people over 50, but it can affect anyone of any age. If something's unusual or won't go away, tell your doctor. In most cases it won't be cancer – but if it is, finding it at an early stage can make a real difference.



Listen to your body

You know your body best, so don't ignore something that doesn't look or feel quite right – this includes any changes to your poo that aren't normal for you.

The symptoms below can all be caused by something less serious than cancer, but it's important to tell your doctor if you notice even one of them:

- A change in your normal bowel habit, such as looser poo, pooing more often or constipation
- Bleeding from your bottom or blood in your poo (blood can look bright red, dark red or turn your poo dark)
- Tummy pain (especially if it doesn't go away) or a lump in your tummy
- Unexplained tiredness or breathlessness
- Losing weight without trying to

Even if it's not on the list above, if it's not normal for you, don't wait and see. Get it checked out. In most cases it won't be cancer. But if it is, finding it early can make a real difference.

Cut your risk

More than half of all bowel cancer cases in the UK could be prevented. You can lower your risk by:

- Eating more foods high in fibre, like wholegrain bread
- Eating less red and processed meat
- Keeping a healthy weight
- Going smoke free
- Cutting back on booze
- Being more active

Consider bowel screening

Screening looks for early signs of bowel cancer. It's for people who don't have any symptoms.

If you're registered with a doctor, you'll be invited to take part in screening every 2 years until you are 74. You will receive your first kit between the ages of 50-60 depending on where you live in the UK. It's important to read the information that comes with your invitation, so you can decide if you'd like to take part.

You'll be sent a poo testing kit, which you can do in your own home and return safely in the post.

There are lots of easy ways to collect your poo sample.

Our top tips include:

- Putting a clean, empty fruit carton or other plastic pot in the toilet to catch your poo.
- Covering your hand with a plastic bag or glove
- Putting cling film over the toilet (remember to leave a dip!)

Even if you've been screened and no matter how old you are, tell your doctor about anything that's not normal for you.

Visit cruk.org/screening to find out more.

Early diagnosis saves lives

Remember, when bowel cancer is spotted at an early stage, treatment is more likely to be successful. Thanks to research, treatments are now kinder and more effective than ever.

How to find out more

We're online...



Find out more about spotting cancer early, including information about cancer screening across the UK, at cruk.org/spotcancerearly

...and on the phone



Our Nurse Helpline is there if you're looking for information or support. Just call **0808 800 4040**.

Talk to your doctor

When you're worried that there's something wrong, telling a doctor can seem difficult.

Here are some ideas for how to get the most out of your appointment, whether it's via phone, video or a face to face conversation.



Be honest. Tell the doctor about anything unusual, even if it doesn't seem that important or you think it might be a bit embarrassing.



Be thorough. Mention all your symptoms and don't put it down to 'just getting older', or another health condition. If it's something that's bothering you, then your doctor will want to hear about it.



Stick with it. Don't worry you might be wasting your doctor's time. Even if you've spoken to them already, they want to know if your symptoms haven't gone away, or if something still doesn't feel quite right.



Be prepared. Think about how to describe any changes and how long you've had them for. Writing down what you want to say can help. It can also be useful to have a list of any medications that you take, including over-the-counter or herbal remedies.

More questions about the bowel screening programme? Call the free NHS helpline on **0800 707 60 60**

If you'd like to provide any feedback on this leaflet or would like to know more about the information sources used in creating it, please email publications@cancer.org.uk

And if you have any questions about Cancer Research UK or would like to support what we're doing, you can call **0300 123 1022**.