

# This little test could help save your life.



## The bowel cancer screening test: What you need to know

Bowel Cancer Screening Programme  
For further information contact the Bowel  
Cancer Screening Team  
Tel: 223740  
Email: [bowelcancerscreening@gov.gg](mailto:bowelcancerscreening@gov.gg)

- 1 One sample
- 2 Complete at home
- 3 Results within 10 working days

Adapted from This Little Test could Save your Life and patient letter © NHS Health Scotland 2017.

March 2019

## Key benefits of the bowel cancer screening test?

- 9 out of 10 people survive bowel cancer if it's found and treated early.
- The test can detect signs of bowel cancer early, even if you don't have any symptoms.
- It can also find other changes in the bowel, such as pre-cancerous growths called 'polyps'.
- You collect the sample in the privacy of your own home.

## Why am I being sent this bowel cancer screening test?

From age 60 onwards, your risk of developing bowel cancer increases, and early signs can be hidden. All men and women in the Bailiwick of Guernsey aged 60-70 will be sent a bowel cancer screening test every two years.

You can still take the test after you turn 71 – call the Bowel Cancer Screening office on 223740 and we'll send you a free test.

**I didn't have any symptoms and I took the test. I was shocked at the result but I'm grateful I took the test. It saved my life.**

## What if I have other health conditions?

It's safe to take the bowel cancer screening test if you have other health conditions, including piles (haemorrhoids).

It's also OK to take the test if you're on medication, including blood thinners, iron tablets or antibiotics.

the future. You can change your mind and opt back in at any time, by ringing the bowel screening on 223740. Opting out is something to think through carefully. It could mean that if you have the condition being screened for in the future, early signs might be missed. You may want to discuss any concerns with your GP.

## What happens to my details?

We keep a record of your tests and your results. All Health and Social Care staff must keep your personal health information confidential which means they're not allowed to share it with anyone except you and others involved in your care.

We may use the information for research, education and training. But if we do, we will remove all the identifying personal information.

Your information will be processed fairly and lawfully and in line with the Data Protection (Bailiwick of Guernsey) Law, 2017. Full details of our Fair Processing Notice and how we look after your data can be found at [www.gov.gg/hscprivacy](http://www.gov.gg/hscprivacy). Paper copy available upon request.

## Where can I find more information or ask questions about bowel cancer screening?

More information about bowel cancer screening can be found online at:

- [www.gov.gg/screening](http://www.gov.gg/screening)
- [www.bowelcancerguernsey.org](http://www.bowelcancerguernsey.org)
- [www.gov.gg/healthyliving](http://www.gov.gg/healthyliving)
- [www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/bowel-cancer](http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/bowel-cancer)
- [www.gov.gg/hscprivacy](http://www.gov.gg/hscprivacy)

**OR**

Telephone: 223740 (Monday to Friday 9am-5pm)

Email: [bowelcancerscreening@gov.gg](mailto:bowelcancerscreening@gov.gg)

## Can I do anything to reduce my risk of developing bowel cancer?

### YES

- As well as doing your bowel cancer screening test, we advise:
- Eating a healthy diet containing wholegrains like wholegrain bread and cereals, beans, pulses, and plenty of fruit and vegetables – limit foods high in sugar or fat and avoid sugary drinks.
- Avoiding processed meat (like bacon and ham) and limit red meat. Advice can be found at [www.gov.gg/healthyliving](http://www.gov.gg/healthyliving).
- Being more active in everyday life, this includes walking more and sitting less.
- Getting to, and keeping a healthy weight – avoid gaining weight and try losing weight if overweight.
- Reducing alcohol consumption.
- Stopping smoking – Quitline Tel: 233170 is available to all for support and help with quitting.
- Speaking to your GP if you've any worries about your bowel habits.

## Opting out of the bowel cancer screening programme

If you decide that you don't want to be screened and don't want any more invitations you can opt out by telephoning or writing to the Bowel Cancer Screening team who will then send you a letter to sign and return to us.

Once this is received you won't get invited to this type of screening in



### Fact

5 out of 300 people will develop bowel cancer over 10 years if they are not screened.

## How do I take the test?

The test involves collecting a small sample of stool (poo) in the privacy of your own home and simply posting it to the PEH laboratory using the pre-paid envelope provided.

Full picture instructions on how to take the bowel cancer screening test are included on the back of your invite letter.

## What happens after I post my sample?

The sample is analysed by a machine in the pathology laboratory of the PEH to see if there is any blood in it. The machine can pick up even tiny amounts that you might not be able to see.

We'll then post your result to you and your GP within 10 working days of receiving your sample in the laboratory.

## What happens after I get my result?

Most people will be told that they don't need any further investigation. If this is your result, you'll be sent another test in 2 years' time if you are still within the eligible age range.

If your test result needs further investigation, you will be offered an appointment with the specialist nurse. This does not necessarily indicate polyps or bowel cancer.

If you don't receive your result letter, or have questions about your result, contact the Bowel Cancer Screening Programme.

## Does blood in my stool (poo) sample mean I definitely have bowel cancer?

**NO**

For every 500 people who take the test, around 25 will need further investigation. Of these 25, one or two may have bowel cancer.

If the amount of blood we find in your stool (poo) sample is above the normal screening limit, we'll need to do more to find out what's causing it. We'll send you an appointment to see a specialist nurse, who will explain the results and any further tests that might be recommended and you will be able to ask any questions you might have.

The most usual next step is to offer a colonoscopy and if this is the case for you, the nurse will provide you with information about the benefits and risks of the procedure.

Colonoscopies are carried out in hospital and involve passing a thin, flexible tube (with a camera on the end) into your bowel so the consultant can see the inside of your bowel on the screen and where the blood may be coming from.



**9 out of 10 people will survive if bowel cancer is found and treated early.**

## Does the test find all bowel cancers?

No. The test will pick up most cases of bowel cancer or polyps but can't find them all. The test looks for blood in your stool (poo) and not all cancers or polyps bleed all of the time.

This is why, as well as doing the test every time you're invited, it's also important to look out for symptoms of bowel cancer:

- Repeated bleeding from your bottom or blood in your stool (poo).
- A recent change in your bowel habit (how often you go to the toilet) that continues for more than four weeks without going back to normal.
- Watery stool (poo) on its own or with constipation.
- Severe pain in your tummy that won't go away especially after eating.
- You've recently lost weight without trying.
- You feel tired all the time.

## Speak to your GP if...

You notice any of the changes above, or anything else that isn't normal for you. Changes can happen between one bowel screening test and the next.