

Screening for Bowel Cancer



BowelScreen

Bowel screening aims to find bowel cancer at an early stage in people who have no symptoms when treatments are more likely to be successful.

The Irish National Bowel Screening Programme offers free bowel screening every two years to men and women aged 59 to 69. Bowel screening involves taking a sample of your poo (stool sample) using a home test kit which is posted to you by BowelScreen. Visual and verbal instructions are provided. The test is done in the comfort of your own home and only takes a few minutes. You place the sample in the special tube included in your kit and send it back to BowelScreen in the sealed free post envelope. This test is called a FIT test (Faecal Immunochemical Test).

A FIT test looks for tiny traces of blood that you might not be able to see and which could be a sign of cancer. Traces

of blood in your poo can also be caused by other medical conditions and doesn't necessarily mean you have cancer. The FIT test does not tell you if you have bowel cancer but it might tell you that you need more tests if blood was found in your sample.

You can call BowelScreen on Free phone 1800 45 45 55 to check if you are on the register.

Bowel screening may also find other changes in the bowel, such as polyps, which are small growths that are not cancer but, if not removed, might turn into cancer. If polyps are found, they can be removed easily.

Screening results

Once you have sent your sample to BowelScreen, you will get a letter with the results in four weeks. Most people will have a normal result. If your results are not normal, this means that blood was found in your stool sample. It does not necessarily mean that you have bowel cancer but it does mean that you may need to have a colonoscopy.

A colonoscopy is an examination of your bowel using a camera on the end of a thin flexible tube to look for any signs of disease in the lining of your bowel. A small sample of the lining of your bowel (biopsy) may be taken to look at more closely.

How bowel cancer is treated

Your treatment will depend on where your cancer is, how big it is and whether it has spread (the stage) the type of cancer (colon or rectal), how abnormal the cells look under a microscope (the grade) and your general health and level of fitness. A team of experts (Multi-Disciplinary Team) will discuss the best treatment for you. Treatment may include one or combination of the following: Surgery, Chemotherapy, Radiation therapy, immunotherapy and targeted cancer drugs.

After bowel surgery you may need a stoma (bag). This may be temporary or permanent.

About the Marie Keating Foundation

Following their mother Marie's death in 1998 from breast cancer, the Keating family committed to ensuring men and women in every community in Ireland had access to the necessary information to prevent cancer or detect it at its earliest stages. Their collective aim was "making cancer less frightening by enlightening".

Through its community information service, the Foundation's dedicated nurses have enlightened thousands of people of the causes and risk factors of all cancers. The Foundation is continuing to expand its awareness campaigns on each of the common cancers, at local level through its community outreach approach as well as through national campaigns.

Today, the Marie Keating Foundation are one of the leading voices in Ireland for cancer prevention, early detection, awareness and support.

"We are committed to being there for people diagnosed with cancer, and their families at every step of this cancer journey, and our services reflect that. Through our information and support services, we reach thousands of people a year, giving education, information and advice focused on cancer prevention and early detection, as well as providing support services and financial assistance to those living with and beyond cancer.

At the time of her death and all through her illness, we could do nothing to help our Mother who had, all our lives, done everything for us. We, the Keating family have set up this charity in her name to try to help and prevent others going through what Mam went through and what we are still going through to this day. This is also to show that such a wonderful mother and person did not die in vain."

Take care,

The Keating Family



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Bowel Cancer
What you should know



UPDATED FEBRUARY 2023



making cancer less frightening by enlightening

Bowel Cancer

the facts

- Bowel cancer is cancer of the colon (large bowel) or back passage (rectum)
- It is also known as colon, rectal or colorectal cancer
- It is one of the most common types of cancer worldwide
- 4th most common cancer in Ireland excluding non-melanoma skin cancer
- Majority of cases occur in people aged 50 and older but it can occur younger
- If caught early, bowel cancer is a very treatable and curable cancer

The Bowel

The bowel is part of the digestive system. It is divided into two parts:

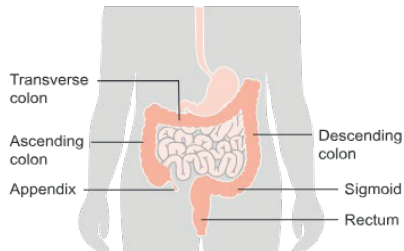
- The small bowel or small intestine
- The large bowel or large intestine

The large bowel is about 5 feet long and consists of the:

- colon
- back passage (rectum)
- bowel opening (anus)

Cancer that affects the small bowel is called **small bowel cancer**. Small bowel cancer is rare.

The food we eat ends up in the large bowel where water and some nutrients are absorbed leaving waste. This passes through the bowel before leaving the body.



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Risks of bowel cancer

Factors that may increase the risk of developing bowel cancer include the following:

- **Age:** the risk of developing bowel cancer increases with age, most cases occur in individuals over 50
- **Family history:** a family history of bowel cancer or certain genetic conditions, such as Lynch syndrome and Familial Adenomatous Polyposis (FAP), can increase the risk
- **Personal history:** individuals who have had bowel cancer previously or who have certain types of polyps are at a higher risk
- **Lifestyle factors:** a diet high in processed meats and low in fruits and vegetables, sedentary behaviour, obesity, smoking and excessive alcohol consumption, can increase the risk
- **Bowel diseases:** history of ulcerative colitis or Crohn's disease for many years increases the risk of developing bowel cancer

Symptoms of bowel cancer

The symptoms of bowel (colorectal) cancer may include the following:

- A change in your normal bowel habit, such as looser poo, pooing more often or constipation
- A feeling of needing to strain in your back passage (as if you need to poo), even after opening your bowels
- Bleeding from your bottom or blood in your poo
- Pain in your abdomen or back passage
- Tiredness and/or breathlessness caused by a lower than normal level of red blood cells (anaemia)
- Losing weight when you haven't been trying to
- A lump that your doctor can feel in your back passage or tummy (abdomen), more commonly on the right side

Other diseases apart from bowel cancer can cause all of the above symptoms. However, if you experience any of these symptoms make an appointment to see your GP to get checked out.

Symptoms of bowel obstruction

Sometimes cancer can block the bowel. This is called a bowel obstruction. It is important to note that bowel obstruction can be caused by health conditions other than bowel cancer such as hernias and adhesions. The symptoms of bowel obstruction may include:

- Cramping pains in the abdomen
- Feeling bloated
- Constipation and being unable to pass wind
- Being sick

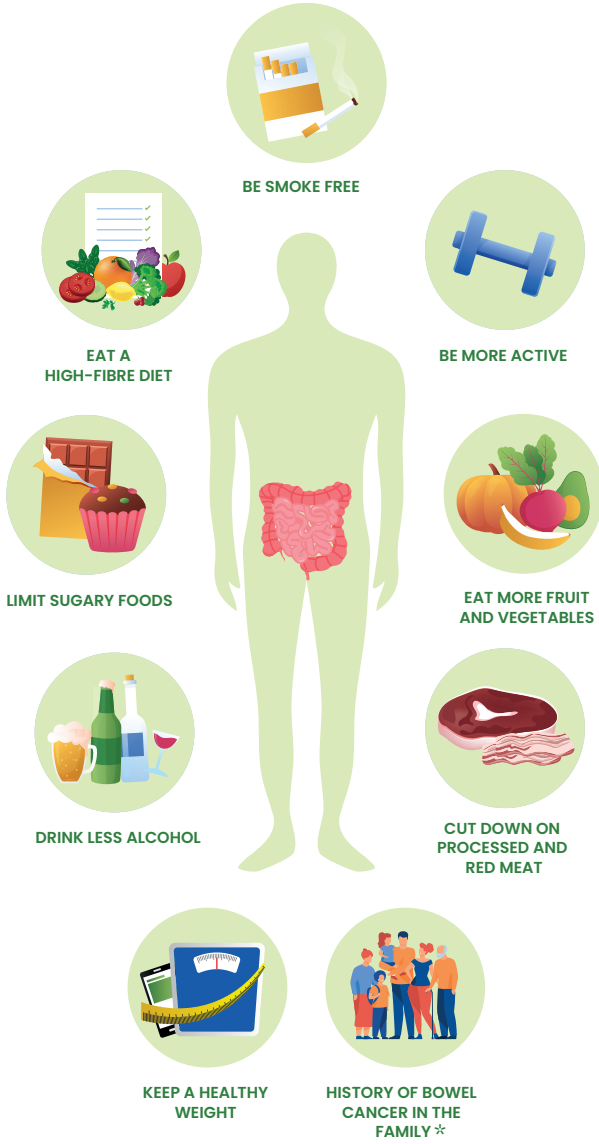
A bowel obstruction is an emergency. You should see your doctor quickly or go to A&E at your nearest hospital if you think you have a bowel obstruction regardless of the cause.

How you can reduce your risk of bowel cancer

- Eat a high fibre diet - lots of fruit, vegetables and whole grains
- Avoid processed meats (such as bacon, salami, sausages, canned meat or chicken nuggets)
- Eat less red meat (beef, pork, or lamb)
- Swap red meat for chicken or fish. Use beans and pulses in meals instead of meat
- Eat less sugary and fatty processed foods such as cakes biscuits and chocolate
- Don't smoke tobacco or get help to quit. Call the free HSE Quit Team on **Freephone 1800 201 203** or **REETEXT QUIT** to **50100**
- Get regular exercise and take control of your weight
- Avoid or limit alcohol consumption
- Participate in bowel screening if you are aged 59 – 69. See next page for more information
- Speak to your G.P. if there is a history of bowel cancer in your family. Your risk of bowel cancer is increased if you have a first degree relative diagnosed with bowel cancer. A first degree relative is a parent, brother or sister, son or daughter
- The risk is increased further if you have more than one relative diagnosed with bowel cancer or if you have a first degree relative diagnosed under the age of 45
- Your G.P. may refer you for genetic testing. This can check for inherited gene changes that may increase the risk of bowel cancer

NINE KEY WAYS TO REDUCE THE RISK OF BOWEL CANCER

MAKE A CHANGE TO DAY...



*Speak to your GP if there is a history of bowel cancer in the family, genetic testing may be recommended.