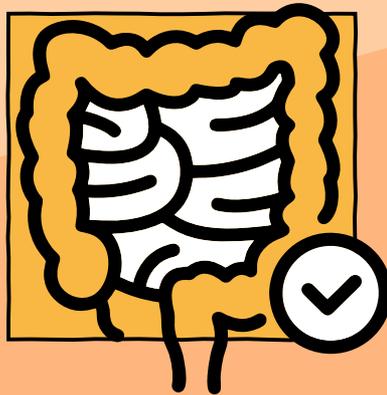


Groundswell

Out of homelessness



Taking part in bowel cancer screening





Who is this leaflet for?

This leaflet provides information for people experiencing homelessness across London on how to participate in bowel cancer screening.

The information might also be helpful for key workers and/or service providers who support people experiencing homelessness to access healthcare services.

What is bowel cancer screening?

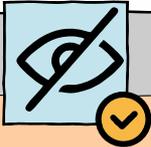
Screening is a way of identifying people without symptoms who may have an increased risk of a particular health issue. The NHS offers a range of screening tests which are **free**.

Bowel cancer screening uses a home test kit, called a **Faecal Immunochemical Test (FIT)** which can detect a problem early, before you have any symptoms.

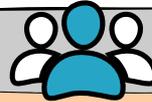
Some people get a disease called bowel cancer. This is a serious illness you can die from. Bowel cancer screening helps find bowel cancer at an early stage.



Bowel cancer screening saves lives



Bowel cancer screening can be done in privacy and in your own time.



Only 2 in 100 of the people who take part in bowel cancer screening need to go for further tests.

100
95
75
25
5
0

Who is bowel cancer screening for?

It is offered to people aged 54-74 (in London) From 2025, bowel cancer screening will be offered to everyone 50 years old and over.

If you are 75 or older, you or someone on your behalf (with your consent) can ask for a free test kit every two years by calling the Bowel Cancer Screening Programme hub freephone number.

It doesn't matter if you have missed your screening invitations, you can still choose to take part by calling the freephone number or ask your GP to re-order you a FIT kit.



Freephone number
0800 707 60 60

AGE

74

50

How does bowel cancer screening work?

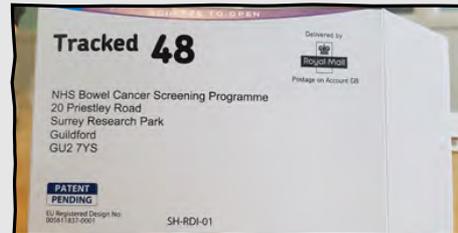
You will be sent an invitation letter first followed by a box with a FIT kit and a freepost envelope.



You use the FIT kit to collect a small sample of poo and send it to a lab. This is checked for tiny amounts of blood.



The test is free and it's also free to post back. You just need to put your completed test kit into the packaging provided and drop it into any post box.



You should get a letter in the post to the address you have registered with your GP surgery within 14 days with your results.

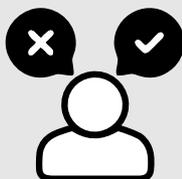


If the test finds anything unusual, you might be asked to go to hospital to have further tests.



Why should I do it?

Finding out about a problem early can mean that treatment is more effective.



Finding out you have a health problem, or an increased chance of a health problem can help you make better informed decisions about your health.

Deciding whether or not to have a screening test is a personal choice and one which only you can make.



If you complete your bowel cancer screening, you may not need to do anything else until you're next invited or you may be asked to have more tests. If you need follow up tests, you will be supported throughout the process.



You can discuss any aspect of the screening test with a health professional and decide whether or not it is right for you.

How can I take part in bowel cancer screening?

You need to be registered with a GP surgery to access a screening.

To do this, you or a trusted person can download the family doctor services registration form (GMS1), fill this out by hand, and hand it into the GP surgery:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gms1>.



Remember

Everyone has the right to access healthcare. You do not need ID or a fixed address to register with the GP and your immigration status does not matter.

It is important that the GP has accurate information for you, in particular:

- **Your name**
- **Your date of birth**
- **Your gender**
- **Your contact details e.g. mobile number and an agreed address for your health letters to go to, e.g. care of (c/o) address.**



Your screening invitation and test kit will be sent to the address you provide to your GP surgery.



A text reminder will be sent to the mobile number your GP surgery has on record to remind you to complete your FIT kit.

If you want to opt out, call the Bowel Cancer Screening Programme Hub freephone number on **0800 707 60 60**.

How do I complete the bowel cancer screening test?

Try to find a toilet or a disabled toilet with more space where you feel comfortable and where there are suitable hygiene facilities such as running water, soap and toilet paper.

This could be at the GP surgery, day centre, your local community centre or any services you use where there is access to a toilet.

If you are unsure, ask a staff member for a toilet space you could use to complete your FIT kit.

There are different ways to collect your sample:

Using toilet paper is the most accessible method, however if you have access to a disposable container, this can also be used.



Opening the pack can be quite fiddly. If you need help to open the pack or seal your FIT kit, ask someone to help. Work is ongoing to provide a solution to support people with dexterity challenges (poor hand function). For more information, you or a trusted person can call the Bowel Cancer Screening Programme Hub freephone number.



You can also watch a short video on how to complete the test online: <https://vimeo.com/showcase/6663813>. Subtitles are available in English, as well as Arabic, Bengali, Chinese (simplified and traditional), Farsi, Gujarati, Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi and Urdu. A British Sign Language version is also available.

Remember

To write the date you completed the test on the FIT kit

1



Not to allow the sample to go in the toilet water

2



Scrape the end of the stick along the stool (poo)

3



Wash your hands after you have completed the test and clicked the lid shut

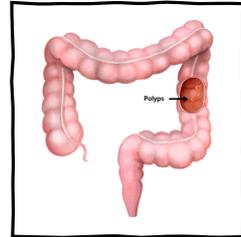
4



Helping you decide

No screening test is 100% reliable. There are pros and cons to consider before taking part in bowel cancer screening.

- A polyp (small growth) or bowel cancer can sometimes be missed if it was not bleeding when the screening test was taken.
- Your FIT result may indicate further investigations are required. This could include a colonoscopy (a camera used to look for changes). It is your choice to have a colonoscopy or not. In rare cases colonoscopy can harm the bowel, but it is widely considered to be safe.
- Bowel cancer may develop in between screening tests, so it is important to be aware of the signs and symptoms of bowel cancer.

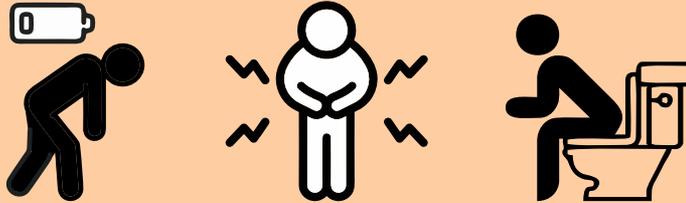


You can talk to your family or key worker about having a colonoscopy. You can also talk to a nurse or your doctor. Or you can call the freephone number.

Freephone number
0800 707 60 60

This guide and the invitations sent to you by the bowel cancer screening programme give you information to decide whether or not you want to be screened – **it is your choice.**

When you should go to see your doctor



Symptoms of bowel cancer may include:

- changes in your poo, such as having softer poo, diarrhoea or constipation that is not usual for you
- needing to poo more or less often than usual for you
- blood in your poo, which may look red or black
- bleeding from your bottom
- tummy pain
- you lose weight quickly without trying to
- you feel tired all the time, and this is not normal for you

See a GP or speak to someone you trust, if you have any symptoms of bowel cancer for 3 weeks or more.

What other information do I need to know?



- ✓ If you change your name, address or phone number, let the GP surgery know.
- ✓ When updating your address, you can provide contact details of your key worker as a second contact.
- ✓ If you move to a new location, you can register with a different GP surgery.
- ✓ If you do not have a fixed address, you can ask your GP surgery to update your records with their address.

If you have any questions or worries, please call the Bowel Cancer Screening Programme Hub freephone number **0800 707 60 60** or ask a trusted person to assist.

An easy read guide to bowel cancer screening:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bowel-cancer-screening-easy-guide>

An easy read guide to having a colonoscopy:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bowel-cancer-screening-colonoscopy-easy-guide>

Find the latest news, real stories and answers to the most common questions about bowel cancer screening:

<https://www.transformationpartners.nhs.uk/bcs/>

"As someone who'd been in active addiction for years, I was convinced I'd done irreparable damage to my body. So, when a bowel cancer screening kit was sent to me, I ignored it for months - I was afraid of getting bad news. Eventually I took the plunge, and the results came back very quickly...negative. I've since taken another test which also came back negative. I am so glad I found the courage to do it, because it's now one less thing to worry about."

Chris, 63 years old – Lambeth.



Scan the QR code for more information
on bowel cancer screening

Acknowledgements

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Image credit

Page 4,7,8: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bowel-cancer-screening-easy-guide>

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