



# About Bowel Screening



**This is a Plain English information leaflet about bowel screening.**

# What is BowelScreen?

BowelScreen is the bowel screening programme in Ireland.

It is part of the National Screening Service.

The Government pays for this health service.

You do not have to pay to use the service. It is free.

# What is a Bowel?

Your bowel is inside your body.

It is a long tube that joins your tummy to your bottom.

Your bowel helps break down the food you eat.

This gives you energy, minerals, vitamins, and water.

The food you eat goes through your bowel and comes out your bottom as poo.

# What is Bowel Cancer?

Cancer is a serious disease that people can get.  
It can stop your body from working properly.

You can get cancer in your bowel.

Some people who get bowel cancer get better.  
Some people who get bowel cancer do not get better.

Men and women can get bowel cancer.

You can get bowel cancer at any age.

Bowel cancer happens more in older people.

Some people get lumps in their bowel called polyps.  
Over time they can sometimes turn into cancer.

# What is Bowel Screening?

Bowel screening can find early signs of bowel cancer in people who feel well.

You can feel well and still have bowel cancer.

Screening is a way to check if your bowel is healthy.

Bowel screening uses a simple test called FIT.

You do this test at home.

It is quick and easy to do.

If cancer in your bowel is found early, it is easier to treat.

You may have more chance of getting better.

# Who is Bowel Screening for?

Every person in the right age group can have a bowel screening test.

BowelScreen puts together a list of people that can be offered a test. This is called a register.

You will be sent a letter asking you if you want to have a test. You will also be sent information about the test.

You will be asked every two years if you want to have a test. You should tell us if your address changes.

# Doing the BowelScreen Test

You have to make a poo to do the test.

There is no need to be embarrassed.

The test does not hurt.

To ask for a home test kit call us free on 1800 45 45 55 or email [info@bowelscreen.ie](mailto:info@bowelscreen.ie)

We will send you the test kit in the post with:

- a letter and information leaflet
- a plastic bag
- a tube with a sampling stick
- an envelope so you can post it back for free.

When you send back your test, a special machine looks for blood in your poo that you will not be able to see.

There can be blood in your poo for different reasons.

It can be a sign that something is wrong in your bowel.

# Doing the BowelScreen Test

We have a photo story about doing the BowelScreen test.

It tells you what you to do.

There is also a short video on our website about how to do the test.

<https://www2.hse.ie/screening-and-vaccinations/bowel-screening/home-screening-test-to-detect-signs-of-bowel-cancer.html>

# Important Things to Know

Bowel screening can save lives, but no screening test is perfect. Please see our leaflet on the benefits and harms of screening for more information.

Some bowel cancers might be missed.

They can be missed because cancers and polyps do not bleed all the time.

Changes can happen to your bowel between screening tests. This is why you should have the test every two years.

See your doctor if you are worried at any time. Do not wait for your next test.

You can phone or email us to check if you are on the register. You can look at our website.

# Important Things to Know

You will be asked for consent every time you have a bowel screening test.

Please see our leaflet on giving consent for screening tests.

You consent to take part in BowelScreen by calling us to ask for a home test or by signing up for a test online.

BowelScreen keeps your information safe and private.

Please read our leaflet on looking after your information.

# Getting your Result

You will get a letter with the result of your test.

The result takes a few weeks.

Most people get a normal result.

You will be invited to take the test again in two years.

You could get a not normal result.

This means there is blood in your poo and you need more tests.

You can read our leaflet about more tests.

Your doctor will get a copy of your result.

# What are the signs of Bowel Cancer?

There are different signs of bowel cancer.

The signs of bowel cancer can be:

- blood in your poo
- going to the toilet more or less often
- watery poo
- pain in your tummy
- losing weight without trying.

Talk to a family member, carer, or friend if you are worried.

They can support you to tell your doctor.

Tell your doctor if there is a change to your poo or if anyone in your family had bowel cancer.

# Staying Healthy

A healthy lifestyle is very important.

To cut down your chances of bowel cancer:

- Exercise
- Stay at a healthy weight
- Do not drink too much alcohol.

Eat plenty of fruit, vegetables, brown bread, brown rice, and cereals.

Eating lots of red meat is bad for your bowel.

# More information

[www.bowelscreen.ie](http://www.bowelscreen.ie)

Phone us free on 1800 45 45 55

[info@bowelscreen.ie](mailto:info@bowelscreen.ie)

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The photo on the cover was taken  
by Pauline Dennigan Photography.



An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Scagthástála  
National Screening Service



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