NHS
North East London
Cancer Alliance

Looking after your bowels



Screen • Spot the signs • Make small changes

What should I do at my age?

under 50 — Know the signs

Bowel cancer can affect adults of any age. Know what is normal for you and contact your GP if you have possible symptoms. Healthy everyday choices can also help reduce your risk.



50 to 74 — Do the test

The NHS sends you a free bowel screening FIT kit every 2 years if you are registered with a GP in England. Do it even if you feel completely well. Make sure your GP has your latest postal address.



75 and over — Keep screening

You will not be sent a kit automatically, but you can ask for one every 2 years. Call the free bowel cancer screening helpline on **0800 707 60 60**.



Screening is for people with no symptoms

If you have symptoms, do not wait for your next screening kit - contact your GP. This applies at any age and even if your last screening result was normal.

Your bowel screening test:

Simpler than you might think

- Make sure you are registered with a GP in England.
- Give your GP your up-to-date contact address.
- Look out for your kit.
- Between the ages of 50-74 you will automtically receive your kit in the post every two years.
- Complete your kit and send it back in the envelope provided.
- All of this is free and could save your life!



Your kits looks like this



PRIVATE
Do it in the privacy of your own home.

TINY SAMPLE
You only need enough poo to cover the grooves on the small sampling stick.

NO TOUCHING
You do not need to touch your poo with your hands.

NO PAIN
There are no needles, examinations or procedures involved in doing the FIT kit.

HYGIENIC
The sample goes straight back into the sealed bottle and then into the return envelope.

KIT PROVIDED
The sample bottle, stick, instructions and return envelope are supplied. You just need something clean to catch your poo.

How to collect your sample



1. Catch it

Use a clean disposable container or layers of toilet paper. Do not let the poo touch the toilet water.



2. Scrape it

Twist open the bottle and gently scrape the sampling stick along the surface of the poo until all the grooves are covered. That is enough - do not add extra.



3. Click it

Put the stick back into the bottle and close the cap until it clicks. Do not reopen it.



4. Post it

Write the date on the bottle, put it in the prepaid return envelope, seal it and post it as soon as possible. Wash your hands afterwards.



Put it by the loo. Don't put it off.

Most people - **around 97 in every 100** - do not need further tests after screening. If further tests are needed, the screening team will explain what happens next.

Find out more

North East London Cancer Alliance
nelcanceralliance.nhs.uk/bowel-screening

Know the signs of bowel cancer

Most people with these symptoms will not have bowel cancer.
But if something is unusual for you or does not go away, get it checked.

Possible symptoms include:

- Bleeding from your bottom
- Blood in your poo
- A change in how often you poo, or regularly having diarrhoea or constipation
- Losing weight but you're not sure why
- Feeling very tired all the time but you're not sure why
- A pain or lump in your tummy

Do the test • Know the signs • Look after your bowel

Get urgent help

Ask for an **urgent GP appointment** or use **NHS 111** if your poo is black or dark red, or you have bloody diarrhoea.
Call **999** or go to **A&E** if bleeding from your bottom will not stop or there is a lot of blood.

Eating well can help reduce your risk

There is no single ‘superfood’ that prevents bowel cancer.
Your overall diet and lifestyle matter more.



Choose more fibre

Try wholemeal bread, brown rice, wholewheat pasta, oats, beans, lentils, chickpeas, fruit and vegetables.



Cut down on processed meat

Eat bacon, ham, salami, hot dogs and other processed meats less often. Processed meat increases bowel cancer risk.



Eat less red meat

If you eat lots of beef, pork or lamb, reduce how often and how much you have. Swap some meals for fish, chicken, beans or lentils.



Keep a healthy weight and move more

Being physically active and maintaining a healthy weight can help reduce your risk of bowel cancer and other cancers.



Drink less alcohol and don’t smoke

Both alcohol and smoking increase cancer risk. The less alcohol you drink, the lower your risk.

An interesting fact

Cancer Research UK estimates that 54% of bowel cancer cases in the UK are preventable. Eating enough fibre is particularly important: around 28% of bowel cancer cases are linked to eating too little fibre.