

When you will receive a screening invitation

The bowel cancer screening programme was paused in March 2020 in response to the coronavirus pandemic. Screening colonoscopy services were reintroduced by Trusts from June 2020, for those who had had a positive screening result and were on a waiting list for this investigation.

Routine invitations for bowel cancer screening started again from week commencing 17th August 2020, beginning with those who were due to be sent a test at end March 2020. All routine invites will continue to be delayed by approximately five months until the programme has the capacity to catch up.

Completing your screening test kit

When you receive your test kit, you should follow the instructions of how to collect your sample and return it to the laboratory in the envelope provided. The process for collecting your sample has not changed. You should receive your screening test result within 2 weeks.

What to do while you wait for your screening invite

While you wait for your invite it is important to be symptom aware. If you are concerned about symptoms of bowel cancer you should seek advice from your doctor. Symptoms may include:

- unexplained bleeding/blood in your stools
- a change in bowel habit
- pain or swelling in your abdomen
- unexplained weight loss
- unexplained tiredness.

Your safety if you need further investigations

If your screening test shows traces of blood in your bowel motion, you will be asked to contact the freephone helpline. Appointments with the Specialist Screening Practitioner (nurse) have mostly moved to be telephone appointments. A suitable time for the nurse to call you will be arranged by the helpline staff.

The Specialist Screening Practitioner will assess your fitness for further investigations and will advise you on all the measures the Trust is taking to keep you and their staff safe at this time.

When attending the hospital for any investigations you will be asked to wear a face covering, you may be asked to attend alone and you may have to wait outside until the time of your appointment.

If you have symptoms of coronavirus, or have been in contact with someone who does, you must not go to your colonoscopy appointment. Contact the Trust and let them know you have coronavirus symptoms. Your appointment can be rearranged for a time after you have isolated.

‘Taking the test could save your life’

health and premature death. Over 1,000 people every year in Northern Ireland are diagnosed with the disease and over 400 will die. Symptoms often develop late in the disease, leaving limited scope for treatment and potential cure. If detected at a very early stage bowel cancer treatment can be 90% successful.

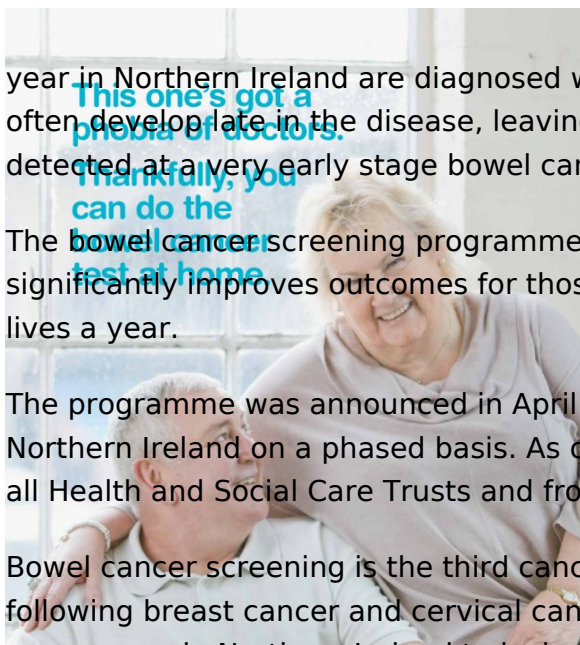
The bowel cancer screening programme, which allows early detection and treatment, significantly improves outcomes for those with the disease which will save approximately 60 lives a year.

The programme was announced in April 2010 and implementation has been rolled out across Northern Ireland on a phased basis. As of January 2012 bowel screening is now in place across all Health and Social Care Trusts and from April 2014 will also be extended to the age of 74.

Bowel cancer screening is the third cancer based screening programme in Northern Ireland, following breast cancer and cervical cancer screening. It is the first cancer screening programme in Northern Ireland to include men.

The bowel cancer screening programme involves the use of a home testing kit to collect a sample of bowel motion. Completed tests kits are returned to a laboratory which looks for traces of blood in the sample. Blood indicates that further investigations, usually a colonoscopy, are required.

The Northern Ireland Bowel Cancer Screening Programme is supported by a comprehensive communications plan which encourages participation through an integrated programme of public relations; a mass multi-media campaign that includes television, radio and press.



This one's got a phobia of doctors. Thankfully, you can do the bowel cancer test at home.

For further information on bowel cancer screening please see:

[Bowel cancer screening programme awareness campaign: Radio advertisement](#)

[Bowel cancer screening programme awareness campaign: Television advertisement](#)

[Bowel cancer screening: how to take the test](#)

[Bowel cancer screening: the repeat test](#)

[Bowel cancer screening: the next step](#)

[Bowel cancer screening: the facts](#)

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