

# Bowel Cancer Awareness



Around 1,000 people are diagnosed with bowel cancer each year in Northern Ireland. Bowel cancer is the second most common cause of cancer death among people in Northern Ireland. About 1 in 20 people will develop bowel cancer in their lifetime and it is more common in older people, particularly men.

## Be symptom aware

Possible symptoms of bowel cancer can include:

- blood in your poo
- looser poo, pooing more often and/or constipation
- a pain or lump in your tummy
- feeling more tired than usual for some time
- losing weight for no obvious reason

These symptoms do not mean that someone has bowel cancer. But if you or someone you know have any of these symptoms for 3 weeks or more, please speak with your GP.

## Reducing the risk of bowel cancer

- Complete your bowel cancer screening test when invited to take part in screening
- Eat a healthy diet. Make sure you get five portions of fruit and vegetable each day, and include wholegrains, beans and pulses for fibre. Limit the amount of red meat you eat, especially processed red meat.
- Be active. Moving more and sitting less can reduce your risk of serious illness. Aim for at least 2 and a half hours each week.
- Maintain a healthy weight. Avoid gaining weight and try losing weight if overweight.
- Drink less. To keep risks to a low level, don't drink more than 14 units of alcohol a week.
- Stop smoking. Your local free Stop Smoking Service can help - find them at [www.stopsmokingni.info](http://www.stopsmokingni.info)
- Find advice about a healthy lifestyle at [www.choosetolivebetter.com](http://www.choosetolivebetter.com)

# Bowel cancer screening

Bowel cancer screening is offered to people aged 60-74 every two years. The test is easy to complete and is done in private at home. Further information on the test and the bowel cancer screening programme is available via NI Direct at:

[www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/bowel-cancer-screening](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/bowel-cancer-screening)

## FIT implementation in the Bowel Cancer Screening Programme

The Northern Ireland Bowel Cancer Screening Programme introduced quantitative faecal immunochemical testing (FIT) as the primary bowel cancer screening test in January 2021, bringing Northern Ireland in line with other regions in the UK.

Quantitative FIT has several advantages over the previous faecal occult blood test.

- FIT is a more sensitive test, meaning it is better at detecting traces of blood and potentially detecting more bowel cancers and adenomas (lesions that may develop into cancer if not treated).
- FIT is easier to complete. The test has a simpler process and only requires a single sample.
- In other parts of the UK introducing FIT has resulted in an increase in screening uptake.

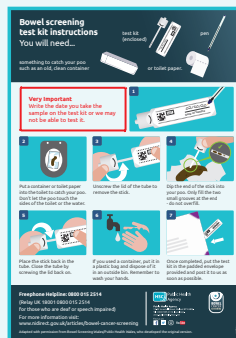
Please click on the links below to view our information leaflets about the bowel cancer screening programme. Translations into 13 languages are available alongside the English language versions.

### Bowel cancer screening: the facts



[www.publichealth.hscni.net/publications/bowel-cancer-screening-facts-english-and-10-translations](http://www.publichealth.hscni.net/publications/bowel-cancer-screening-facts-english-and-10-translations)

### Bowel screening test kit instructions



[www.publichealth.hscni.net/publications/bowel-screening-test-kit-instructions-english-and-translations](http://www.publichealth.hscni.net/publications/bowel-screening-test-kit-instructions-english-and-translations)

### Bowel cancer screening: the next step



[www.publichealth.hscni.net/publications/bowel-cancer-screening-next-step-english-and-10-translations](http://www.publichealth.hscni.net/publications/bowel-cancer-screening-next-step-english-and-10-translations)

Cancer Research UK have developed an animated video explaining how to complete the screening test:

<https://youtu.be/hS2Sp2Ex0z4>



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