



All about bowel screening

timetobowelscreen.nz



Te Whatu Ora
Health New Zealand

**Te Kāwanatanga
o Aotearoa**
New Zealand Government

**Time to
screen**

National
Bowel
Screening
Programme

This booklet has information on bowel cancer and bowel screening, to help you decide whether to take part in the free National Bowel Screening Programme.

It explains how regular screening can help find bowel cancer at an early stage, when it can often be successfully treated, and provides information about the potential benefits and risks of bowel screening.



If you need more information:

- go to timetobowelscreen.nz
- free phone 0800 924 432
- email info@bowelscreening.health.nz
- or talk to your doctor.



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What is the National Bowel Screening Programme?

This is a free programme to help detect bowel cancer.

It is being offered every two years to men and women aged 60 to 74 years who are eligible for publicly funded health care.

Those eligible to take part will be sent:

- **an invitation letter.**
- **a consent form.**
- **a free bowel screening test kit, with instructions on how to use it.**

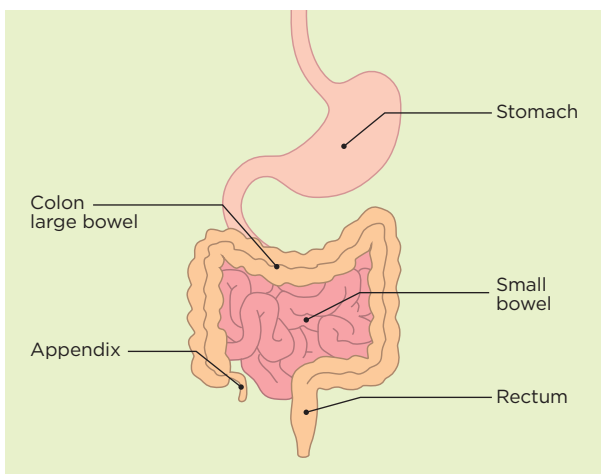
The test is done at home and is simple to do.

Information about who is eligible for publicly funded health services is available on the Te Whatu Ora website: **www.tewhatauora.govt.nz** or by phoning **0800 924 432**.

If you do not want to take part in the National Bowel Screening Programme, please call us on free phone **0800 924 432** and let us know.

What is the bowel?

The bowel is part of the food digestive system. It joins the stomach to the anus (bottom) and helps waste material (called a bowel motion, faeces or poo) to leave the body. The bowel is made up of the small bowel and large bowel (colon) and rectum.



What is bowel cancer?

Bowel cancer is also called colon, rectal or colorectal cancer.

Bowel cancer starts when cells in the bowel begin to grow out of control. The cells can turn into a polyp (growth) and some polyps may turn into a cancer over a number of years.

It can take a long time before the cancer grows and spreads to other parts of the body.

Regular bowel screening, for people who are not experiencing any bowel symptoms, provides an opportunity to find and treat bowel cancer at an early stage.

What are the symptoms of bowel cancer?

Common symptoms of bowel cancer may include:

- a change in your normal bowel habit that continues for several weeks.
- blood in your bowel motion.

Although these symptoms are usually caused by other conditions, **it's important to get them checked by your doctor.**

How common is bowel cancer?

New Zealand has one of the highest rates of bowel cancer in the world. Bowel cancer is the second highest cause of cancer death in New Zealand. Currently more than 3300 people are diagnosed with bowel cancer every year and more than 1200 die from it.

Who is at most risk?

Bowel cancer is more common in those over the age of 60 years, and is more common in men than in women.

You can reduce your risk of developing bowel cancer by:

- having a healthy diet high in fruit, vegetables and fibre.
- regular exercise.
- being smokefree.

If you have had extensive inflammatory bowel disease, or have a family history of bowel cancer, you may have a higher risk of developing bowel cancer (see pages 9-10).

Why is regular bowel screening important?

There may be no warning signs that you have bowel cancer. However bowel screening every two years can help save lives.

! If you develop symptoms of bowel cancer at any time, it is important to talk to your doctor.

What is the bowel screening test?

The test used by the National Bowel Screening Programme is a faecal immunochemical test (FIT). It can detect tiny traces of blood present in a small sample of your bowel motion (poo). This may be an early warning sign that something is wrong with your bowel. You do the test yourself in your own home.





The free test is quick and simple to do by yourself at home.

How do I do the test?

Do the test as soon as possible. It is important to do your test within six months of receiving the kit. The laboratory can't process tests which have passed their expiry date.

To do the test, you need to:

- collect a small sample from your bowel motion (poo) using the test stick, and put it into the tube.
- put the sample in the zip-lock bag, along with the dated and completed consent form.
- post it as soon as possible in the reply-paid envelope provided.

Keep the sample in a cool place until you post it. It does not need to be kept in the fridge. Post the test on the same day or the next day as delays could spoil your sample.

Screening is for people who don't have symptoms

! Most people aged 60 to 74 years who have no obvious symptoms of bowel cancer can do the bowel screening test.

Who should talk to their doctor?

Some people may have an increased risk of developing bowel cancer.

The risk factors include:

- you have two or more close family members on the same side of the family who have had bowel cancer.
- you have a close family member who was diagnosed with bowel cancer at a young age (under 55 years).
- you and your family have a known or suspected genetic bowel cancer syndrome.
- you have had extensive inflammatory bowel disease, such as ulcerative colitis, for more than 10 years.

If you have one of these risk factors you should discuss this with your doctor at your next visit.

You should still do the bowel screening test, even if one of these risk factors applies to you.

Who should not do the bowel screening test?

Bowel screening is not right for everyone. You should not be part of the bowel screening programme if you:

- have symptoms of bowel cancer (see page 6).
- have had a colonoscopy within the last five years.
- are on a bowel polyp or bowel cancer surveillance programme.
- have had, or are currently being treated for, bowel cancer.
- have had your large bowel removed.
- have ulcerative colitis or Crohn's disease that is currently active.
- are seeing your doctor about bowel problems.

If you are not sure if bowel screening is right for you, talk to your doctor.

If you have had a colonoscopy within the last five years and regular colonoscopies are not planned for you, please let us know. We will re-invite you to join the programme if you are still eligible, five years from when you had your colonoscopy. You can call us free on **0800 924 432**.

How will I get my result?

You will be contacted with your result and told what this means for you. You may also receive a call from your doctor or a nurse.



When will I get my result?

You will receive your test result within three weeks of returning your completed bowel screening kit. If you don't receive your result within three weeks, please call the National Bowel Screening Programme on free phone **0800 924 432**, or email info@bowelscreening.health.nz.

What does a negative test result mean?

If your test result is negative this means that you do not need any further investigation at this time.

It's important to note that:

- the screening test detects blood in your bowel motion (poo), and some cancers do not bleed all the time. This means cancer can sometimes be missed.
- bowel cancer may start to develop between screening tests.

This is why regular screening is important.

You will be invited for screening again in two years, if you are still eligible.

! If you develop symptoms of bowel cancer at any time, it is important to talk to your doctor.

What does a positive test result mean?

A positive test result does not necessarily mean you have bowel cancer.

The screening test can detect tiny traces of blood present in your bowel motion (poo).

Small amounts of blood are most commonly caused by polyps (growths), or other minor conditions such as haemorrhoids (piles), which can easily be treated.

Polyps are not cancer, but may develop into a cancer over a number of years. Most polyps can be easily removed at colonoscopy, reducing the risk that bowel cancer will develop.

If your test is positive it means you will need a further investigation. This will usually be a colonoscopy. A colonoscopy can find bowel cancer at an early stage, when it can often be successfully treated.

Your doctor or a nurse will contact you to discuss your results and the type of follow up test that is right for you.

If you have a family history of bowel cancer, you may also be advised to see your doctor, or be referred to the New Zealand Familial Gastrointestinal Cancer Service.



What does a colonoscopy involve?

A colonoscopy involves a specially trained health professional putting a thin tube into your anus (bottom). There is a very small camera on the end of the tube which is used to examine the lining of your bowel, to see if there are any problems. A colonoscopy can identify whether polyps or cancers are present.

If a cancer is found, a small sample or biopsy will be taken and if polyps (growths) are found they will generally be removed. The samples or removed polyps are sent to the laboratory for analysis to check for cancer. Taking a biopsy or removing polyps is usually painless.

About 7 in 10 people who have a colonoscopy as part of the National Bowel Screening Programme will have polyps, which if removed may prevent cancer developing.

About 7 in 100 people who have a colonoscopy as part of the National Bowel Screening Programme will be found to have cancer and most will require treatment.

Are there risks from a colonoscopy?

Colonoscopy is considered a safe procedure. However, as with most medical procedures, problems can sometimes happen.

There is a small risk the colonoscopy procedure itself, or removal of polyps, will cause serious bleeding or damage to your bowel and you may need further treatment.



Do I need to pay for the colonoscopy, other tests or treatment?

If you are eligible to take part in the National Bowel Screening Programme, the colonoscopy and any follow-up tests or treatments within the public health system are free.

What if I have bowel cancer?

If you are found to have bowel cancer you will be referred to a specialist. The main treatment for bowel cancer is surgery. In some cases chemotherapy or radiotherapy may be recommended.



How successfully can bowel cancer be treated?

People who are diagnosed with bowel cancer at an early stage have a much greater chance of being successfully treated. If the cancer is detected at a later, more advanced stage, it is harder to treat.

Do I have all the information I need?

It's important that you are fully informed about all aspects of bowel screening before you decide to take part in the National Bowel Screening Programme, and do the screening test.

For more information on the National Bowel Screening Programme:

- go to **timetobowelscreen.nz**
- free phone **0800 924 432**
- email **info@bowelscreening.health.nz**

Who can access my information?

Information about any further assessment or treatment you may need will be collected from both public and private health services and used to monitor and evaluate the National Bowel Screening Programme.

Personal information and data are collected, stored, accessed and destroyed to a standard that complies with the Privacy Act 2020.

If I am not satisfied with the service I received, how do I make a complaint?

The Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights allows you to make a complaint in a way that is appropriate for you.

If you want to make a complaint about this programme or the service you have received, you can phone the National Bowel Screening Programme on **0800 924 432**, or email info@bowelscreening.health.nz, for more information about the best options for you.

You can also get information from the Office of the Health and Disability Commissioner. Call **0800 112 233** or visit www.hdc.org.nz.



Information in other languages

Māori

He tono tēnei kia whakauru mai koe ki te Kaupapa ā-Motu Tātari Whēkau me tētahi aromatawai koreutu hei āwhina kia kitea tōmuatia te mate pukupuku whēkau e pai ake ai te whakamaimoa. Ki te hiahia koe ki te kōrero Māori mō tēnei aromatawai koreutu, me waea mai ki

0800 924 432.

Cook Islands Māori

Te pati ia atu nei koe, kia piri mai ki roto i te Porokaramu Akara'anga Rapakau'anga o te Tu'anga Vairanga Tutae, no tetai akara akatinamou'anga ma te kore e tutaki, no te kimi viviki i te maki pu'aroto o te vairanga tutae, kia rauka i reira kia rapakau ia kia meitaki tikai. Me ka anoano koe i te tuatua i roto i te reo Kuki Airani ki tetai tangata no teia akara'anga rapakau ma te kore e tutaki, me ka tika, kapiki'ia te numero tereponi **0800 924 432.**

Samoaan

'Ua vala'auina 'oe 'ina 'ia 'e 'auai i le Polokalame Aoao e Siaki ai le Ga'au (tulou lava) ma fai ai sau su'ega fai fua e vave sa'ili ai le kanesa o le ga'au (bowel cancer), 'auā e mafai ai ona vave togafitia. 'A 'e fia talanoa i se tasi e uiga i lenei su'esu'ega fai fua i le gagana Samoa, fa'amolemole e telefoni mai le numera **0800 924 432.**

Tongan

'Oku fakaafe'i atu koe ke ke kau ki he Polokalama Fakafonua ki hono Sivi 'o e Ngākau', pea ko e fakahoko 'o e sivi ta'e totongi ni' ke tokoni ke 'ilo tōmu'a e kanisā, 'a ia 'e malava 'o faito'o lelei'. Kapau 'oku ke fie lea ki ha taha fekau'aki mo e sivi ta'etotongi ko'eni' 'i he lea fakaTonga, pea telefoni ki he **0800 924 432.**'

Niuean

Kua ole ki a koe ke matutaki ke he Fakaholoaga Tiviaga Gākau he Motu, ko e tiviaga ai fai totogi ke kumikumi ke moua tuai e gagao kenesā he gākau he magaaho ke kautu lahi ai e tuluiaga. Kaeke kua manako a koe ke tutala mo e taha hagaa ke he tiviaga ai fai totogi nei ke he vagahau motu hau ti fakamolemole vilo e nūmela **0800 924 432**.

Chinese

你被邀請參加全國腸道篩查計畫，並做一項免費的測試。此測試能讓腸癌早發現，且得到更有效的治療。如果你想與人談一談這個免費測試，歡迎致電 **0800 924 432** 聯繫中文協調員。

Korean

대장암을 조기 발견해 보다 효과적인 치료를 받으실 수 있도록 무료 대장암 검사를 받으십시오.

이 무료 대장암 검사 테스트에 대해 귀하의 언어로 통화를 원하시면 **0800 924 432** 로 연락 주시기 바랍니다

Hindi

आपको आंत परीक्षण कार्यक्रम (बॉवल स्क्रीनिंग प्रोग्राम) में भाग लेने और एक निःशुल्क टेस्ट करने के लिए आमंत्रित किया जाता है जिससे आंत कैंसर को जल्दी ढूँढने में मदद मिल सके, जब उसका उपचार अधिक सफलता से किया जा सकता है।

अगर आप इस निःशुल्क टेस्ट के बारे में किसी से बात करना चाहते हैं तो कृपया

0800 924 432 पर फोन करें।

Information

For more information about the National Bowel Screening Programme:

- please visit **[timetobowelscreen.nz](https://www.timetobowelscreen.nz)**
- free phone **0800 924 432**
- email **info@bowelscreening.health.nz**
- or talk to your doctor.

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