



BowelScreen

The National Bowel Screening Programme

Fact-sheet for health professionals

Further sources of information: www.bowelscreen.ie/healthprofessional

Freephone: 1800 45 45 55 Option 2

Email: info@bowelscreen.ie

BowelScreen is a Government-funded, quality assured programme that offers a free bowel screening home test to people aged 60 to 69 living in Ireland every two years. The initial screen is a simple home test to look for traces of blood not visible to the eye in the bowel motion. BowelScreen will over time be offered to all people aged 55 to 74. BowelScreen is part of the National Screening Service which is part of the Health Service Executive (HSE). NSS also provides the population-based health screening programmes BreastCheck, CervicalCheck and Diabetic RetinaScreen.

Why screen for bowel cancer?

Bowel (colorectal) cancer is the second most common newly diagnosed cancer among men and women in Ireland. Each year almost 2,500 new cases of bowel cancer are diagnosed. The number of new cases is expected to increase significantly over the next 10 years, due mainly to an increasing and ageing population. It is also the second most common cause of cancer death in Ireland. Each year about 1000 men and women die from bowel cancer in Ireland.

International evidence shows bowel screening to be a clinical and cost effective tool for cancer control. BowelScreen's primary aim is to reduce mortality from bowel cancer amongst the eligible asymptomatic population. Early detection permits more effective treatment than if diagnosed later, when symptoms have already appeared. Early detection and removal of pre-malignant adenomas (polyps) also reduces the incidence of colorectal cancer by preventing cancer actually developing in the first instance.

Bowel screening can also reduce the burden of treatment on the individual patient, reducing the stress, disruption and anguish that a cancer diagnosis and subsequent treatment can bring to the individual, their family and friends.

GPs, health professionals and the wider primary care community play a central role in supporting existing population-based screening programmes. With the support of the primary care community, BowelScreen will make a very real difference to the health of people in Ireland.

Who is eligible to participate in BowelScreen?

People aged 60 to 69 living in Ireland are eligible to participate as long as they are not currently in treatment for bowel cancer or in a follow-up programme for a previous diagnosis of bowel cancer. If a person is either in treatment or in a follow-up programme for bowel cancer they should continue with their current course of treatment and follow-up. If and when they are discharged from follow-up, they are then eligible to participate.

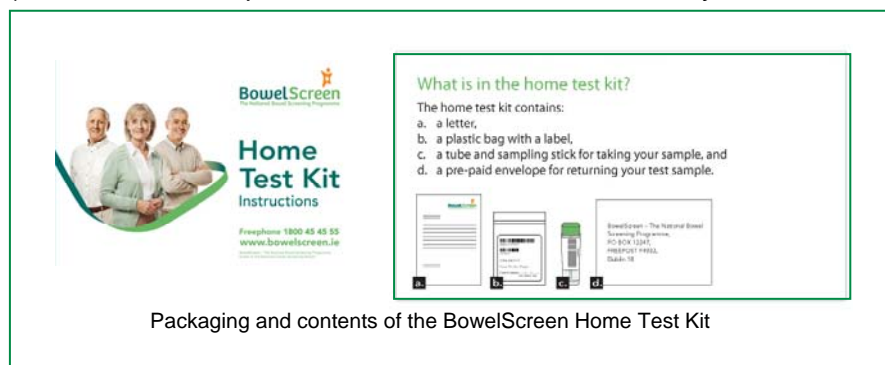
BowelScreen will be offered to all people aged 55 to 74 over time. BowelScreen will offer a home test kit to the eligible population every two years. BowelScreen is being introduced on a phased basis with the first round of invitations to screening for the initial 60 to 69 year olds to be completed by the end of 2015.



How BowelScreen is experienced by the eligible population

BowelScreen has a register of people eligible for screening from details supplied by the Department of Social Protection. In keeping with the Data Protection Act, personal details and health records are kept safe and confidential. To check whether a person is on the register please contact Freephone 1800 45 45 55 or www.bowelscreen.ie

1. Over time all those on the register will receive an invitation letter and leaflet about bowel screening and be asked to consent to participate by contacting Freephone 1800 45 45 55 with their GP's details. The GP will be sent copies of the participant's correspondence with BowelScreen
2. The participant is posted a free home screening test kit called a faecal immunochemical test (FIT) that looks for the presence of blood not visible to the eye in the bowel motion



3. This easy-to-use home test kit includes step-by-step instructions for self-administration of the test at home. The test can be done at any time of day or night. The completed test is sent Freepost by the participant to an accredited laboratory for analysis
4. Approximately 95 per cent of people will receive a normal test result and will be sent another home test kit in two years' time while they remain within the eligible age range. An information sheet about bowel health will be provided
5. Approximately five per cent of people will receive a not normal result following the home test kit and will require an additional follow up test
6. They will be offered a colonoscopy at a hospital-based screening colonoscopy unit contracted by the NCSS to provide this service. An information leaflet about colonoscopy will be provided
7. Each person will firstly be contacted by a nurse, who will assess the person's suitability for colonoscopy and then guide them through the colonoscopy process
8. In the event that further treatment or surgery is required, defined pathways have been developed in conjunction with the National Cancer Control Programme (NCCP)