



# About Bowel Screening



**This is a Plain English information leaflet about bowel screening.**

# What is BowelScreen?

BowelScreen is the bowel screening programme in Ireland.

It is part of the National Screening Service.

The Government pays for this health service.

You do not have to pay to use the service. It is free.

# What is a Bowel?

Your bowel is inside your body.

It is a long tube that joins your tummy to your bottom.

Your bowel helps break down the food you eat.

This gives you energy, minerals, vitamins, and water.

The food you eat goes through your bowel and comes out your bottom as poo.

# What is Bowel Cancer?

Cancer is a serious disease that people can get. It can stop your body from working properly.

You can get cancer in your bowel.

Some people who get bowel cancer get better.

Some people who get bowel cancer do not get better.

If cancer in your bowel is found early, it is easier to treat.

You may have more treatment choices and more chance of getting better.

Men and women can get bowel cancer.

You can get bowel cancer at any age.

Bowel cancer happens more in older people.

Some people get lumps in their bowel called polyps.

Over time they can sometimes turn into cancer.

# What are the signs of Bowel Cancer?

There are different signs of bowel cancer.

The signs of bowel cancer can be:

- blood in your poo
- going to the toilet more or less often
- watery poo
- pain in your tummy
- losing weight without trying.

Talk to a family member, carer, or friend if you are worried.

They can support you to tell your GP.

Tell your GP if there is a change to your poo or if anyone in your family has had bowel cancer.

# What is Bowel Screening?

Bowel screening can find early signs of bowel cancer in people who feel well.

You can feel well and still have bowel cancer.

Screening is a way to check if your bowel is healthy.

Bowel screening uses a simple test called FIT.

You do this test at home.

It is quick and easy to do.

# Who is Bowel Screening for?

Every man and woman aged 60-69 years can have a bowel screening test.

BowelScreen puts together a list of all people offered a test. This is called a register.

You will be sent a letter asking you if you want to have a test. You will also be sent information about the test.

You will be asked every two years if you want to have a test. You should tell us if your address changes.

# Doing the BowelScreen test

You have to make a poo to do the test. There is no need to be embarrassed.

The test does not hurt.

To ask for a home test kit call us free on 1800 45 45 55.

We will send you the test kit in the post with:

- a letter and information leaflet
- a plastic bag
- a tube with a sampling stick
- an envelope so you can post it back for free.

When you send back your test, a special machine looks for blood in your poo that you will not be able to see. There can be blood in your poo for different reasons. It can be a sign that something is wrong in your bowel.

We have a photo story about doing the BowelScreen test. It tells you what you to do.

There is also a short video on our website about how to do the test.

<https://www2.hse.ie/screening-and-vaccinations/bowel-screening/home-screening-test-to-detect-signs-of-bowel-cancer.html>



# Important things to know

Bowel screening can save lives but no screening test is perfect. There are good and bad points to all screening tests.

Some bowel cancers might be missed.

They can be missed because cancers and polyps do not bleed all the time.

Changes can happen to your bowel between screening tests.

This is why you should have the test every two years.

See your GP if you are worried at any time.

Do not wait for your next test.

# Getting your result

You will get a letter with the result of your test.

The result takes a few weeks.

Most people get a normal result.

You will be invited to take the test again in two years.

This result does not guarantee that you do not have cancer, or that you will never get it in the future.

You could get a not normal result.

This means there is blood in your poo and you need more tests.

You can read our leaflet about more tests.

# Bowel Screening - Your Choice

Only you can give your consent to be part of our programme.

Consent means you choose if you want to do the BowelScreen test or not. You can say yes or no to the test.

You might want someone to look at this leaflet with you.

Ask questions if you're not sure.

You consent to take part in BowelScreen by calling us to ask for a home test or by signing up for a test online.

Tell us if you need support or more information to make a choice about taking part in BowelScreen.

We have an access officer that can assist you to use our service.

You can email [access@bowelscreen.ie](mailto:access@bowelscreen.ie)

or call for free on 1800 45 45 55

You can phone us to check if you are on the register.

You can look at our website.

# Bowel Screening - Your Choice

If you do not want to take part in BowelScreen, phone or email us and tell us.

We will take you off our list and will not contact you again.

If you change your mind at a later date you can call us again.

We can put you back on the list.

BowelScreen will give you information about our screening programme.

We will communicate with you in a clear way.

We will tell you the truth.

# Looking after your information

BowelScreen keeps your information safe and private.

BowelScreen staff will only share your information with others involved in your care.

We follow the laws on looking after your personal information.

You have the right to see the personal information that we have about you.

You can ask for it in writing by post or by email.

# Staying Healthy

A healthy lifestyle is very important.

To cut down your chances of bowel cancer:

Exercise

Stay at a healthy weight

Do not drink too much alcohol.

Eat plenty of fruit, vegetables, brown bread, brown rice, and cereals.

Eating lots of red meat is bad for your bowel.

# More information

[www.bowelscreen.ie](http://www.bowelscreen.ie)

Phone us free on 1800 45 45 55

[info@bowelscreen.ie](mailto:info@bowelscreen.ie)

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The photo on the cover was taken by Pauline Dennigan Photography.



An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Scagthástála  
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