



Bowel Screening

Check Yourself Out

All About Bowel Screening

National Bowel Screening
Programme

This booklet provides 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, you can call the National Bowel Screening Programme on **0800 924 432**, visit our website: **www.bowelscreening.health.govt.nz** or talk to your doctor.



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>> What is the National Bowel Screening Programme?

This is a **free** programme to detect bowel cancer at an early stage.

It is being offered to everyone every two years aged 60 to 74* in your District Health Board (DHB) area who is eligible for publicly funded healthcare.

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.

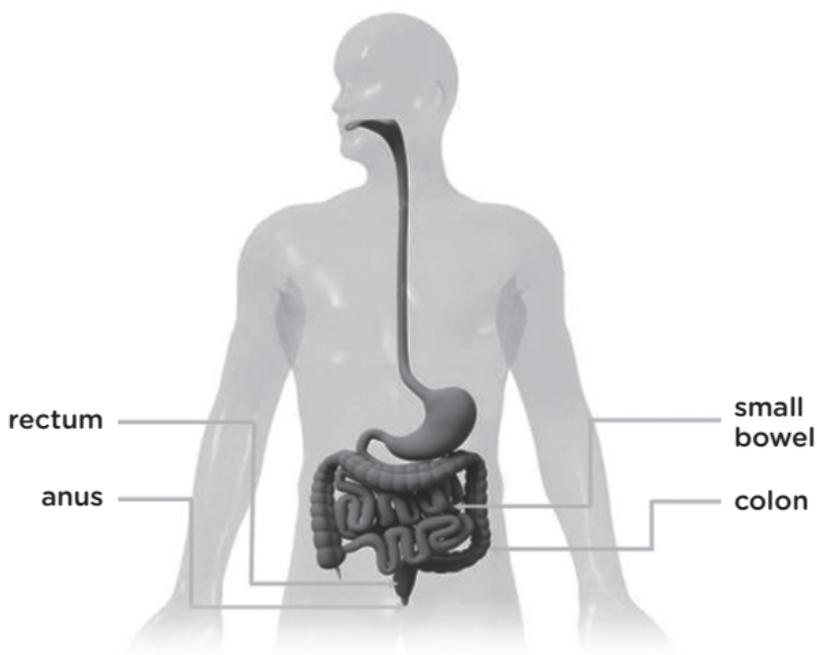
Information on who is eligible for publicly funded health services is available on the Ministry of Health website: **www.health.govt.nz**

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

* *Waitemata DHB residents who are under the age of 60 and have been invited to take part in the bowel screening pilot (2012-2017) will continue to be invited for screening every two years, if they still live in the Waitemata DHB area.*

>> What is the bowel?

The bowel is part of our food digestive system. It is divided into the small bowel and the large bowel, and connects the stomach to the anus (bottom) where waste material (called a bowel motion, faeces or poo) is passed out of the body. The large bowel is where cancer most often develops.



>> What is bowel cancer?

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

Bowel cancer occurs when normal cells on the inside of the bowel become abnormal and grow out of control. The cells can turn into a polyp (growth) and some polyps may eventually develop into 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, of people who are not experiencing any 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 to your normal pattern of going to the toilet 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. More than 3000 people are diagnosed with bowel cancer every year and more than 1200 die from the disease.

>> Who is at most risk of bowel cancer?

Bowel cancer is more common in those over the age of 60, 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
- not smoking

People who have had extensive inflammatory bowel disease, or have a family history of bowel cancer, may have a higher risk of developing bowel cancer (see pg 8).

» Why is regular bowel screening important?

Bowel screening every two years can help save lives by finding bowel cancer at an early stage, when it can often be successfully treated. There may be no warning signs that you have bowel cancer.

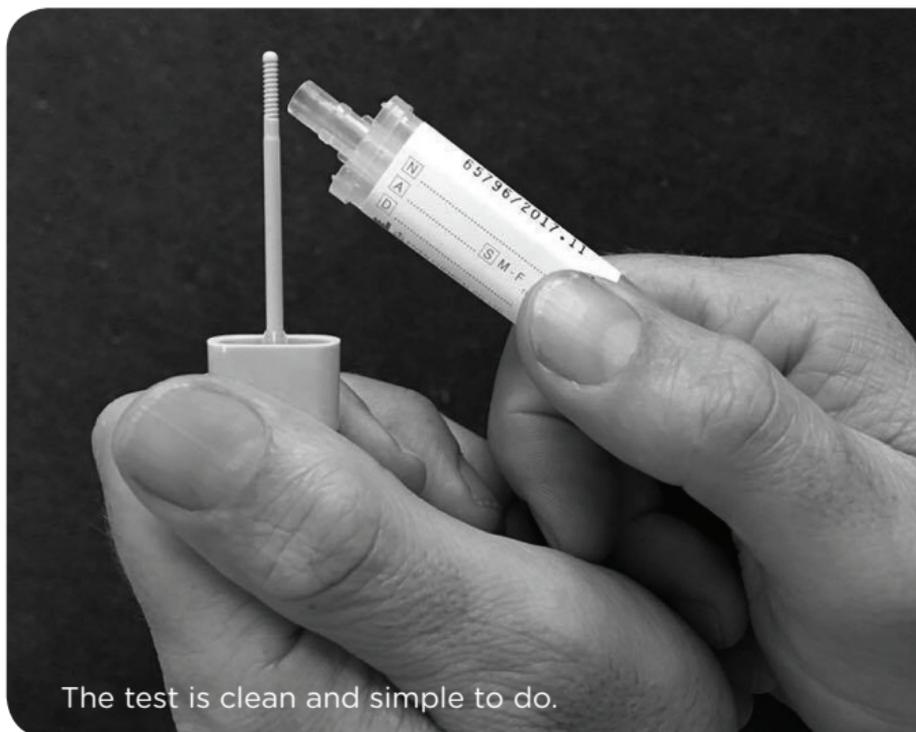
Bowel screening can also detect polyps. These are not cancer, but they may develop into a cancer over a number of years. Most polyps can be easily removed, reducing the risk that bowel cancer will develop.



If you develop any symptoms of bowel cancer, it is important that you 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 test is clean and simple to do.

>> **How do I do the test?**

The free test is quick, clean and simple to do by yourself at home. Your test kit comes with instructions on how to use it, and a consent form.

It is important to return your test kit within six months of receiving it.

To do the test, you need to:

- collect a small sample from your bowel motion (poo), and put it into the tube
- put the sample tube in the zip-lock bag provided, along with the signed and completed consent form
- post it as soon as possible in the Freepost envelope provided

Keep the sample in a cool place until you post it. To prevent any postal delays, it's best not to send it on a Friday, Saturday or Sunday.

>> Screening is for people who don't have symptoms



Most people aged 60 to 74 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 has been diagnosed with bowel cancer at a young age (under 55 years)
- you have a number of family members over two or three generations who have had bowel cancer
- 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 pg 5)*
- *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*
- *are currently being treated for ulcerative colitis or Crohn's disease*
- *are seeing your doctor about bowel problems*

» How will I get my results?

You will receive a letter with your results and information about what this means for you. You may also receive a call from your doctor or a nurse.

» When will I get my results?

You will receive your results within three weeks of returning your completed bowel screening kit. If you don't receive your results within three weeks, please call the National Bowel Screening Programme on **0800 924 432**.

>> What does a negative test result mean?

If your test result is negative this means that you don't need any further investigation at this time.

However, because bowel cancers do not bleed all the time there is a risk that a cancer may be missed if it was not bleeding when your test was done.

Bowel cancer may also start to slowly develop between screening tests.

That's why doctors recommend you repeat the screening test every two years, if you are still eligible.



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

>> What does a positive test result mean?

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

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

If your test is positive it means you will need a further investigation. This will usually be a colonoscopy (an internal examination of the large bowel).

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 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 doctor 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 the doctor sees any polyps in your bowel, they will generally remove them and send them to the laboratory to check for any cancer cells.

Polyps are not cancers, but may develop into a cancer over a number of years. Removing polyps is usually painless.

»» ***About seven 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 seven 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 with few risks. However, as with most medical procedures, problems can sometimes happen.

There is a very 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?**

The colonoscopy and any follow-up tests or treatments organised 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.

You can find more information on the National Bowel Screening Programme at:

www.bowelscreening.health.govt.nz or
freephone **0800 924 432**.

» 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 Health Privacy Code 1994.

» 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** 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

You are invited to take part in the National Bowel Screening Programme and do a free test to help find bowel cancer early, when it can be more successfully treated. If you would like to speak to someone about this free test please call **0800 924 432** and ask for the Māori Coordinator.

He tono tēnei kia whakauru mai koe ki te Kaupapa Tātari Whēkau ā-Motu 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 mō tēnei aromatawai koreutu me waea mai ki **0800 924 432** ka tono ki te Kaiwhakarite Māori.

Samoaan

'Ua vala'auina 'oe 'ina 'ia 'e 'auai i le Polokalame e Siaki ai le Ga'au ma fai ai sau su'ega fai fua e vave sa'ili 'Ua vala'auina 'oe 'ina 'ia 'e 'auai i le Polokalame Aoao e Siaki ai le Ga'au 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 leni su'esu'ega fai fua, fa'amolemole e telefoni mai le numera **0800 924 432** ma fesili mo le Tagata Fa'afoe e silafia le Gagana Samoa.

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'e totongi ko'eni' pea telefoni ki he **0800 924 432** 'o talanoa ki he toko taha ngāue 'oku lea faka-Tonga'.

Niuean

Ko e ole kia koe ke matutaki ke he Fakaholoaga Tiviaga he Gakau ma e Kautu, ko e tiviaga ai fai totogi ke kumikumi ke moua tuai e gagao kenesā he gakau he magaaho ke kautu lahi ai e tuluiaga. Ka manako a koe ke tutala mo e taha hagai ke he tiviaga ai fai totogi nei ti fakamolemole vilo e numela **0800 924 432** ke fakatutala mo e tagata Niue Fakatonotonu.

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. 무료 대장암 검사에 대해 한국인 직원과 통화를 원하시면 **0800 924 432**로 연락 주시기 바랍니다

Hindi

आपको राष्ट्रीय आंत के कैंसर के परीक्षण कार्यक्रम में भाग लेने और एक निःशुल्क परीक्षण के लिए आमंत्रित किया जाता है जिससे कि आंत के कैंसर का जल्दी पता लगाया जा सके, जब इसका अधिक सफलतापूर्वक इलाज किया जा सकता है। अगर आप इस निःशुल्क परीक्षण के बारे में किसी से बात करना चाहते/चाहती हैं, तो कृपया **0800 924 432** पर फोन करें और हिन्दी-भाषी समन्वयक के लिए पूछें।



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New Zealand Government

For more information on the
National Bowel Screening Programme

please visit

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call the programme on

0800 924 432

or talk to your doctor