

April is bowel cancer awareness month

We'd like to take this opportunity to raise awareness about bowel cancer

What is it?

Bowel cancer is cancer that starts in the large bowel (colon) or back passage (rectum). It is also known as colorectal cancer.

Why is it important?

Every 15 minutes in the UK someone is diagnosed with bowel cancer. It's more common in the over 50s but it can affect people of all ages. Around 268,000 people living in the UK today have been diagnosed with the disease and it is the second most common cause of cancer death in the UK.

What is bowel cancer screening?

Screening is a way of testing healthy people to see if they show any early signs of cancer and it saves lives.

The aim is to detect bowel cancer at an early stage, when treatment has the best chance of working. The test can also find polyps (non-cancerous growths), which might develop into cancer. Polyps can usually be removed to lower the risk of bowel cancer.

The NHS Bowel Cancer Screening Programme offers screening every two years to all men and women aged 60 to 74.

If you're aged 75 or over, you can ask for a screening test by calling the **free bowel cancer screening helpline on 0800 707 60 60**. You can also call this number for further information on bowel screening.

Please see the video below for a guide on the FIT bowel screening test. FIT stands for faecal immunochemical test. It looks for tiny traces of blood in the poo which may be a sign of bowel cancer.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=il6VSceMWfM>

What are the symptoms?

- Bleeding from your bottom and/or blood in your poo
- A persistent and unexplained change in bowel habit
- Unexplained weight loss
- Extreme tiredness for no obvious reason
- A pain or lump in your tummy

Most people with these symptoms don't have bowel cancer. Other health problems can cause similar symptoms. But if you have one or more of these, or if things just don't feel right, please speak to your GP.