

NHS Bowel Cancer Screening Programme

A part of the national NHS Bowel Cancer Screening Programme, the Cambridge Bowel Cancer Screening Centre is undertaking a screening programme for the populations of Cambridgeshire and West Suffolk from October 2007.

Facts & figures

- the **NHS Bowel Cancer Screening Programme** is the first national cancer screening programme in England to target both men and women
- bowel cancer is the second most common cause of cancer deaths in the UK
- **80%** of bowel cancers arise in people who are over 60
- there are **35,000** cases of bowel cancer identified every year in the UK
- there are **16,000** deaths a year from cancer
- research has shown that screening can reduce the number of deaths from bowel cancer, in those invited for screening, by **16%**

What is the purpose of bowel cancer screening?

Bowel cancer screening aims to detect bowel cancer at an early stage when treatment is more likely to be effective. Bowel cancer screening can also detect polyps – these are not cancers but may develop into cancers over time. They can easily be removed reducing the risk of bowel cancer developing.

Who can have bowel cancer screening?

Men and women aged 60–69, and registered with a GP, will automatically be invited to take part in the screening programme and will be sent a Faecal Occult Blood test every two years.

What is a Faecal Occult Blood test?

You can carry out the test in the privacy of your own home. It is a kit used to collect small samples of bowel motion on a special card which is returned Freepost to a laboratory in Nottingham. Results are received by post within 14 days.

Does the kit detect cancer?

No – but it will show whether any further tests are needed. The samples are analysed to see if they contain tiny traces of blood that may be invisible to the naked eye. Polyps and bowel cancers sometimes bleed which is why we screen for blood in your bowel motions.

What are the symptoms of bowel cancer?

The most common symptoms are:

- persistent change in bowel habit, especially going more often or looser bowel motions for several weeks
- bleeding from the bottom with no obvious reason
- pain in the tummy, especially if severe
- a lump in the tummy

If you have one or more of these symptoms for 4–6 weeks do not wait for an invitation to the Programme – you should visit your GP. Please remember that most of these symptoms will not be cancer.

I am over 70 – what about me?

You can request a test kit by calling the free phone helpline 0800 707 6060.

I am under 60 – what about me?

If you are under 60 and have any of the listed symptoms you should visit your GP

