

This little test could help save your life.



The bowel screening test: What you need to know



One sample



Complete at home



Results within two weeks

Your bowel screening test

Half a million people in Scotland do their bowel screening test each year.

Bowel cancer is the third most common cancer in Scotland.

Your bowel screening test can find bowel cancer early when it can often be cured.

Do you know the benefits of the bowel screening test?

9 out of 10 people survive bowel cancer if it's found and treated early

The test can find bowel cancer early, even if you don't have any symptoms

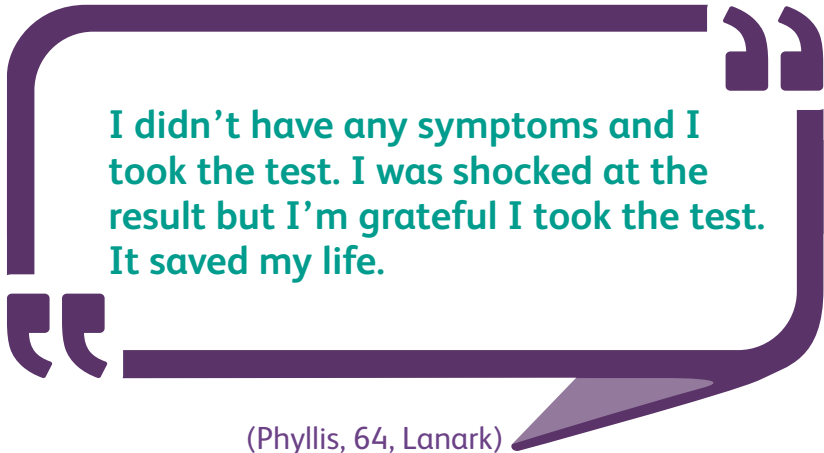
You do the test in the privacy of your own home

The bowel screening test is now quicker and easier to use, with just one small sample to send.



Why am I being sent this bowel screening test?

From age 50 onwards, your risk of having bowel cancer is higher, and the early signs can be hidden. All men and women in Scotland aged 50 to 74 will be sent a bowel screening test every two years. You can still take the test after you turn 75 if you'd like to – call the free Scottish Bowel Screening Centre Helpline on **0800 0121 833** (textphone **18001 0800 0121 833**) and we'll send you a free test.



I didn't have any symptoms and I took the test. I was shocked at the result but I'm grateful I took the test. It saved my life.

(Phyllis, 64, Lanark)

What if I have other health conditions?

It's safe to take the bowel screening test if you have other health conditions, including piles (haemorrhoids).

It's also OK to take the test if you're on medication, including blood thinners, iron tablets or antibiotics.


Facts



- You're 14 times more likely to survive bowel cancer if it's found early.
- Around 4,000 people in Scotland get bowel cancer every year.

How do I take the test?

- Full picture instructions on how to take the bowel screening test are included on the back of your letter.
- You twist the top of the test to open it. Then you dip the end of the stick into your poo sample, replace the stick in the tube and make sure you close the test.
- The test can be done in the privacy of your own home and returned using the pre-paid envelope provided.
- There's a useful step-by-step video guide to home bowel screening. Visit www.nhsinform.scot/bowelscreening



My test went straight in the drawer. Then I thought, I need to get over the embarrassment! I did the test as I realised it could be lifesaving.

(Anne, 51, Glasgow)

What happens after I post my test?

We'll test your poo for hidden blood. Then we'll post your result to you two weeks after you send the test back to us.

What happens after I get my result?

Most people will be told that they don't need any further investigation. Changes can happen between one bowel screening test and the next. You should also talk to your GP if you notice any of the changes listed on page 7. It's important to remember that while this test picks up most bowel cancer, it doesn't find all bowel cancer. This is because the test looks for blood and not all cancers bleed all of the time.

We'll send you another test every two years until you turn 75. After that you can still ask for a test by contacting the Scottish Bowel Screening Centre (see page 10).

If the amount of blood found in your poo sample is above the normal screening limit, you'll be referred for an outpatient hospital appointment called a colonoscopy.

For more information about what your bowel screening test result means, visit www.nhsinform.scot/bowelscreening

Does blood in my poo sample mean I definitely have bowel cancer?

No.

For every 500 people who take the test, only 10 will need to go for further investigation. **Of these 10, only one will have bowel cancer.**

If the amount of blood we find in your poo sample is above the normal screening limit, we'll need to do more to find out what's causing it. We usually do this by using a colonoscopy. We'll write to tell you about this. The colonoscopy involves passing a thin, flexible tube into your bowel so it can be examined. The colonoscopy will be done in hospital. It's usually an outpatient appointment, so you shouldn't need to stay in hospital for more than a few hours. Before coming to the hospital you'll need to empty your bowel. You'll be given clear instructions about how to do this before your appointment.

If you're invited for a colonoscopy, you'll receive information about the benefits and risks of the procedure before your appointment.



9 out of 10 people will survive if bowel cancer is found and treated early.

Does the test find all bowel cancer?

No. The test will pick up most cases of bowel cancer but can't find them all. The test looks for hidden blood in your poo and not all cancers bleed. This is why as well as doing the test every time you are invited, it's also important to look out for symptoms of bowel cancer (listed below).

Signs and symptoms include:

- repeated bleeding from your bottom or blood in your poo
- a recent change in your bowel habit (how often you go to the toilet) that continues for more than four weeks without going back to normal
- watery poo on its own or with constipation (constipation on its own is less likely to be serious)
- severe pain in your tummy that won't go away, especially after eating
- you've recently lost weight without trying
- you feel tired all the time.

Speak to your GP if ...

you notice any of the changes above, or anything else that isn't normal for you. Changes can happen between one bowel screening test and the next.

Can I do anything to reduce my risk of bowel cancer?

Yes.

As well as doing your bowel screening test, you can try:

- eating a healthy diet containing wholegrains like wholegrain bread and cereals, beans, pulses, and plenty of fruit and vegetables – limit foods high in sugar or fat and avoid sugary drinks
- avoiding processed meat like bacon and sausages, and limiting red meat
- being more active in everyday life, this includes walking more and sitting less
- getting to and keeping to a healthy weight – avoid gaining weight and try losing weight if overweight
- drinking less alcohol – not drinking alcohol is better for cancer prevention – visit www.alcohol-focus-scotland.org.uk for more information
- stopping smoking – if you do smoke, call the free **Smokeline** on **0800 84 84 84** or visit www.nhsinform.scot/smokeline to help you quit.

You can find more information about healthy living by visiting www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living

What happens to my details?

We keep a record of your tests and your results. All NHS staff must keep your personal health information confidential, which means they're not allowed to share it with anyone except you and other staff involved in your care.

We may use the information for research, education and training. But if we do, we'll remove any of your personal information.

We regularly review what we do to make sure we give you the best service possible. The information you give helps us to spot where we can improve.

If you're not happy with your information being used in this way, call the helpline number below and let us know. You can also ask to see the information we hold about you.

The advisers at the Scottish Bowel Screening Centre will be glad to help with any questions you have and they'll respect your privacy. Contact the free confidential helpline on **0800 0121 833** (textphone **18001 0800 0121 833**).

Opting out of the bowel screening programme

It's your choice whether or not you are screened. If you decide that you don't want to be screened and don't want any more invitations, you can opt out. This means you won't get invited for that type of screening in the future.

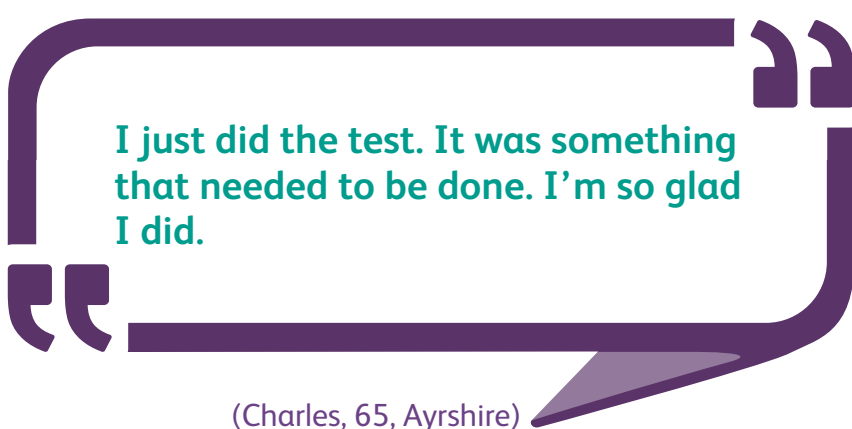
Opting out is something to think through carefully. It could mean that if you have the condition being screened for in the future, early signs might be missed. You may want to discuss any concerns with your GP or someone from the Scottish Bowel Screening Centre on the number above.

Where can I find more information or ask questions about the test?

The advisers at the Scottish Bowel Screening Centre will be happy to answer any questions you have and they'll respect your privacy.

- Phone the free confidential helpline on **0800 0121 833** (textphone **18001 0800 0121 833**)
- Email: bowelscreening.tayside@nhs.net
- You can also go online and visit: www.nhsinform.scot/bowelscreening

You can watch a short film about how to do the test at: www.nhsinform.scot/bowelscreeningtest



I just did the test. It was something that needed to be done. I'm so glad I did.

(Charles, 65, Ayrshire)

This leaflet tells you what you need to know about the bowel screening test, which is offered to all men and women aged 50 to 74 in Scotland every two years.

This resource may also be made available on request in the following formats:



 0131 314 5300

 nhs.healthscotland-alternativeformats@nhs.net



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