

# Spot bowel cancer early

Listen to  
your body

If you want to know more about spotting the signs of bowel cancer, this information is for you.

Cancer is much more common in people over the age of 50, but it can affect anyone of any age.

If you spot something unusual, tell your doctor. In most cases it won't be cancer, but if it is, finding it at an early stage means treatment is more likely to be successful.



## Listen to your body

You know your body best, so don't ignore something that doesn't look or feel quite right – this includes any changes to your poo that aren't normal for you.

Even if it's not on this list, listen to your body and get any unusual changes checked out.

- Bleeding from your bottom or blood in your poo (blood can look bright red, dark red or turn your poo dark)
- A change in your normal bowel habit, such as looser poo, pooing more often or struggling to poo (constipation)
- Unexplained tiredness or breathlessness
- Losing weight without trying to
- Tummy pain (especially if it doesn't go away) or a lump in your tummy



## Talk to your doctor

Whether it's via phone, video or face-to-face, your doctor wants to hear about any unusual changes you're experiencing. If you're worried about talking to a doctor, here are some tips:

### ✓ Be prepared

Think about how to describe any changes and how long you've had them for. Writing down what you want to say and ask can help.

### ✓ Be honest

Tell the doctor about anything unusual, even if it doesn't seem important or you think it might be embarrassing. Your doctor is a professional and is used to helping with lots of different symptoms.

### ✓ Be thorough

Mention all your symptoms and don't put it down to 'just getting older', or assume it's part of another health condition.

### ✓ Stick with it

Don't worry about wasting your GP's time. Even if you're struggling to get an appointment, or you've been to see them already, they want to know if something's still not right.

It may feel embarrassing, but remember, doctors are used to talking about bowel symptoms and are there to help.



## Bowel screening

**Screening looks for early signs of bowel cancer. It's for people who don't have any symptoms.**

If you're registered with a doctor, you'll receive your first kit between the ages of 50-60 depending on where you live in the UK. You will be invited to take part every 2 years until you are 74.

Read the information that comes with your invitation, so you can decide if you'd like to take part.

You'll be sent a poo testing kit, which you can do at home, and an envelope to return it safely in the post for free. Most people find it easy to do.

**Cancer Research UK encourages people to take part in bowel cancer screening.**

Even if you've been screened and no matter how old you are, tell your doctor about anything that's not normal for you.



## Early diagnosis saves lives

### What if it is cancer?

Cancer survival is increasing – more people are surviving their cancer today than ever before.

When cancer is spotted at an early stage, treatment is more likely to be successful. And thanks to research, treatments are now kinder and more effective than ever.

### How to find out more

#### Visit our website

Find out more about spotting cancer early, including information about cancer screening across the UK, at: [cruk.org/spotcancerearly](https://cruk.org/spotcancerearly)

#### Give us a call

Our Nurse Helpline is there if you're looking for information or support. Just call **0808 800 4040**.

If you'd like to provide any feedback on this leaflet or would like to know more about the information sources used to create it, please email [publications@cancer.org.uk](mailto:publications@cancer.org.uk)

And if you have any questions about Cancer Research UK or would like to support what we're doing, you can call **0300 123 1022**.

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