



CANCER  
RESEARCH  
UK

# KNOW YOUR BODY SPOT CANCER EARLY

BOWEL  
CANCER



# TAKE CHARGE

Whether you've heard about it from a friend or family member, seen it in the news, or are just curious: if you want to know more about spotting the signs of bowel cancer, this leaflet is for you.

You'll find out what to look out for, tips for telling your doctor if something's not quite right, and some key facts about screening.

When it comes to your health, remember you're in charge.

**If you do spot something unusual, tell your doctor. In most cases it won't be cancer** – but if it is, finding it early can make a real difference.



# KNOW YOUR BODY

Tell your doctor if you notice any of these:

- A change in your normal bowel habit, such as looser poo, pooing more often and/or constipation
- Bleeding from your bottom or blood in your poo. This can look red, or it can be black and make your poo look dark, like tar
- Tummy pain (especially if it doesn't go away) or a lump in your tummy
- Losing weight without trying to

If you get to know what's normal for you – and that includes knowing your poo – you'll be more likely to notice changes.

Even if a change isn't on the list above, talk to your doctor.

## LOOK OUT FOR YOUR SCREENING INVITE

Screening looks for early signs of bowel cancer. **It's for people who feel healthy and do not have any symptoms.** Even if you've been screened, tell your doctor about anything that's not normal for you.



People aged 60-74 who are registered with a doctor are automatically invited every two years. In Scotland, the age range is 50-74 years.



Invitations and screening tests are sent in the post. Read the information to decide whether you'd like to take part.

# CUT YOUR RISK

There are proven steps you can take to lower your risk of bowel cancer:



## GO SMOKE FREE

Smoking can increase your risk of bowel cancer. Contact your free local Stop Smoking Services or speak to a doctor, nurse or pharmacist for help with stopping.



## KEEP A HEALTHY WEIGHT

Weight can have a big impact on your risk of cancer, so start making small changes to your diet and activity.



## THINK ABOUT WHAT YOU'RE EATING

Eat more fruit, vegetables and foods high in fibre. Eat less processed and high calorie foods.



## MOVE MORE

Being more active can reduce your risk so try fitting more activity into your daily routine.



## CUT BACK ON BOOZE

The less you drink, the lower your risk. Try having some more alcohol free days each week.

## WHAT ELSE AFFECTS YOUR RISK?

- **Age:** As with most cancers, the risk of bowel cancer increases with age, and most cases are in people over 50.
- **Family history:** If close family members have had bowel cancer, or if you have certain bowel conditions, you may be more likely to get the disease.

# TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR

When you're worried about your health, telling a doctor can feel tough. Here are our tips to get the most out of your appointment:



**Be open.** Some symptoms are tricky to talk about, but there's nothing to be embarrassed of: we are all human!



**Be as stubborn as your symptom.** Don't worry you're wasting your doctor's time. If your symptoms haven't gone away, make another appointment. Your doctor will want to know.



**Be thorough.** Don't dismiss changes as 'part of getting older' or assume they are down to another health condition you might have – mention them to your doctor.



**Be prepared.** Have a think about how to describe the changes, and roughly how long you've had them for.

# EARLY DIAGNOSIS SAVES LIVES

What if it is bowel cancer? Remember, when it's spotted early, treatment is more likely to be successful. Thanks to research, treatments are kinder and more effective than ever.

## WE'RE ONLINE...



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

## ...AND ON THE PHONE



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

To provide feedback on this leaflet or find out more about the sources used to create it, call **020 3469 8333** or 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 us call **0300 123 1022**.



LET'S BEAT CANCER **SOONER**

