

GP Insight | February 2019

Faecal Immunochemical Test

Bowel screening in Wales

Inside:
A3 poster for
your patients
explaining how
to do FIT bowel
screening



CANCER
RESEARCH
UK

Together we will beat cancer



People in Wales aged
60–74
and who are registered on the Welsh Demographic System are invited by post to take part in bowel cancer screening every two years. The Bowel Screening Wales programme aims to reduce mortality from bowel cancer in the eligible screening population.

FIT for Wales

On 28 January 2019 Faecal Immunochemical testing (FIT) will start to replace guaiac Faecal Occult Blood testing (gFOBt) in the NHS Bowel Cancer Screening Programme in Wales. Roll out will be phased with 1 in 28 people receiving the new kit from the end of January. Full roll out is expected in June 2019.

FIT facts

- Introduced in Wales with a threshold of 150 µg haemoglobin/g faeces. Participants who have a screening result of 150 µgHb/g faeces and above will be referred for colonoscopy assessment at their local Health Board.
- Potential to detect more cancers through screening, compared with gFOBt.

Bowel cancer screening uptake in Wales is currently around 53%, and even lower in deprived areas¹. Screening with FIT can make a real difference. The 2014 pilot in England increased uptake by around 7 percentage points (66.4% FIT vs 59.3% gFOBt) and almost doubled uptake by previous non-responders, with the greatest increases among men and increases across all deprivation groups².

In autumn 2018 Welsh Government requested that the Bowel Screening Wales programme, via a series of developments, widen the age criteria to 50–74 years and increase the sensitivity of FIT from a threshold of 150 to 80 µgHb/g faeces by 2023.

¹ Bowel Screening Wales, 2017. Annual Statistical Report 2016/17. (37.6% is the uptake of the most deprived quintile of Wales in Cardiff and Vale UHB).

² Moss et al, 2016. Increased uptake and improved outcomes of bowel cancer screening with a faecal immunochemical test: results from a pilot study within the national screening programme in England. Gut 66(9):1631-1644.

Why is FIT replacing gFOBt?



FIT pilots have shown improved participation, especially in men, younger and more deprived groups.



Only one faecal sample is required and doesn't need to be stored, making the test easier to use and more convenient to complete.



FIT only detects human blood and results are not influenced by the presence of other blood in stools, such as that ingested through food and medicines.



FIT is more sensitive, so will have a higher advanced adenoma detection rate and potentially a higher bowel cancer detection rate.



Cost effective alternative to the current test.

(source:cruk.org/cancerstats)

Your involvement is key

The switch to FIT provides a great opportunity to raise screening with your patients. As you'll be aware, screening is an effective way to detect bowel cancer before symptoms show. When diagnosed at the earliest stage, more than 9 in 10 people will survive bowel cancer for more than 5 years.

What you can do:



Support your patients so that they can make an informed decision about whether they wish to take part in screening or not. As well as the benefits, your patients should be aware of the risks of false positive and negatives, over-reassurance following a normal result, overtreatment, and the risks associated with follow-up colonoscopy.



Break down practical barriers by using the fold-out in this guide. Download English and Welsh versions of the poster or direct patients to a short animation at cruk.org/bowelcancerscreening. You can also link to this on your practice website.



Sign post to good quality resources, such as the freephone Bowel Screening Wales Helpline (**0800 294 3370**) and cruk.org/bowelcancerscreening.



Remind patients that screening works better if they take part each time they're invited even if their previous result was negative. A replacement kit can be requested by contacting bowelscreening.feedback@wales.nhs.uk, calling **0800 294 3370** or asking the patient to go to bowelscreening.wales.nhs.uk/contact-us

Be mindful not to be over-reassured by a patient's previous normal screening result. Follow clinical guidelines for how to manage symptomatic patients regardless of screening status. Reinforce the need for patients to be aware of key signs and symptoms of bowel cancer, and to seek medical advice if they notice anything new or unusual.

³ Hewitson, P, Ward, A, Heneghan, C, Halloran, S & Mant, D. (2011) Primary care endorsement letter and a patient leaflet to improve participation in colorectal cancer screening: results of a factorial randomised trial.

⁴ Public Health Wales (2015-2016).

What practices can do to increase uptake

We appreciate the pressures that GP practices are under, but there are ways you can help if you have the resources.

A weekly automatic popup on your practice record systems (i.e. EMIS, Vision or MicroTest) will alert your practice when your patients have been invited to take part in bowel screening but not responded within 6 weeks. This data can be set to auto-file.

Evidence shows that a personalised letter sent from an individual's GP, endorsing the screening programme around the time that they receive their screening kit, increases gFOBt uptake by around 6%³. Although further research is needed to investigate the impact on uptake of FIT, it's reasonable to assume that this intervention is still applicable. Make sure your patients understand the information leaflet they receive with their invitation, so they can make an informed choice about screening.

South Wales practices increased uptake by between 5% and 17% by introducing interventions most suitable for them and their population, including sending letters, putting flags on the system, opportunistic conversations, offering telephone calls or a combination.⁴

You could also try:

- Discussing bowel screening with eligible patients during another consultation as part of a general health enquiry.
- Displaying screening posters, such as the one inside this guide, in your practice waiting area and consultation rooms.

Find out more at doctors.net.uk/FIT. Visit cruk.org/bowelscreeninghub
Email facilitators@cancer.org.uk to request a Cancer Research UK
facilitator visit to your surgery (South Wales only).



The FIT bowel screening pathway

Invitation to participate in bowel screening by FIT test



FIT test kit returned and tested

Negative result
(lower than 150 ugHb/g faeces)

Positive result
(150 ugHb/g faeces and above)

Recall 2 Years for FIT test

Screening assesment

Unfit for colonoscopy

Fit enough for colonoscopy

Refer to clinician for management

Colonoscopy

Consider CT colonogram

Refer to Clinical and Quality Assurance for pathway advice if unsuitable for CT

Complete

Incomplete

Repeat or CT colonogram

Negative
Recall 2 years for FIT test

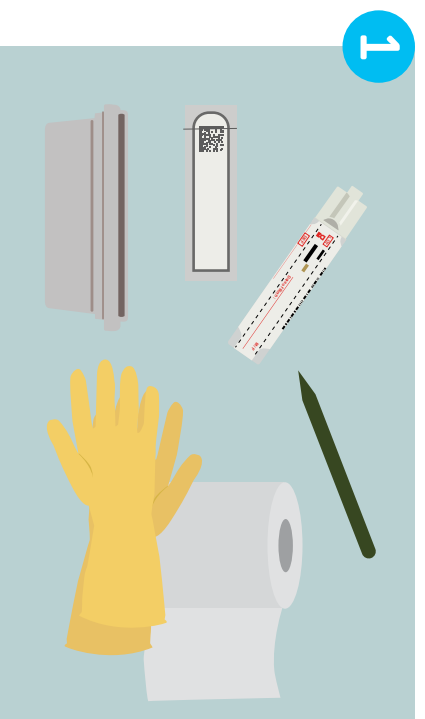
Polyps

Cancer
Refer to Health Board MDT for symptomatic treatment and surveillance

Surveillance programme
High: colonoscopy 1 yr
Intermediate: colonoscopy 3 yrs
Low: recall FIT in 2 yrs

Network MDT for Complex Polyps and subsequent specialist removal at National Referral Centre without need for surgery

How to do the bowel screening kit in Wales



1

Get ready - collect what you need to catch your poo before you sit on the toilet.



2

Take the label from the front of your letter and stick it on the side of the test marked +.



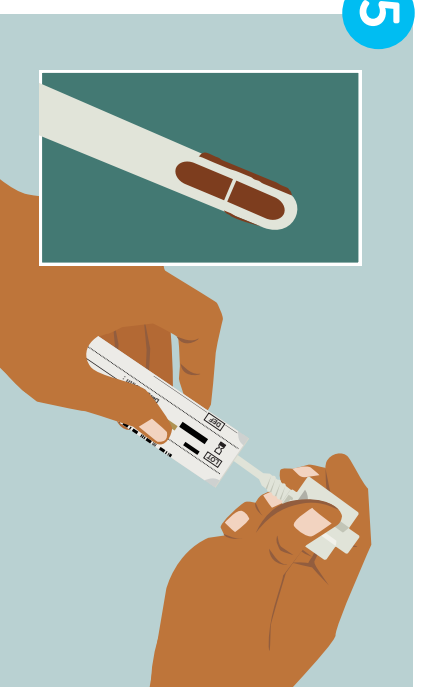
3

On the other side write the date you do the test.



4

Collect your poo - we've given you some ideas for how to do this opposite. Use the stick to take a sample of your poo.



5

Make sure the two holes on the side of the stick are filled with your poo sample. Put the stick back in the tube and twist shut.



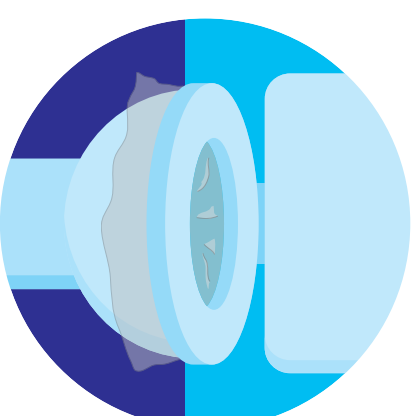
6

Put the kit in the prepaid envelope provided and post it back. You should get your results within 2 weeks.

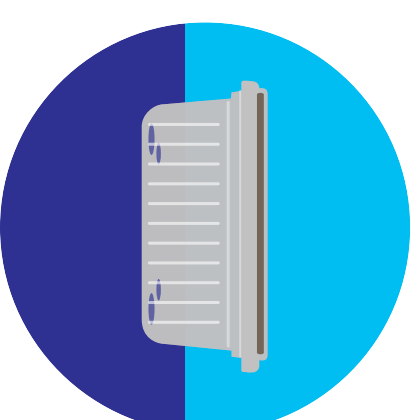
Remember, if you get an abnormal result, it could be down to lots of different things. It doesn't necessarily mean cancer. But if it is cancer, catching it at an early stage means treatment is more likely to be successful.

Tips for collecting your poo

Here are some ideas to make collecting your poo a bit easier. Why not practise and work out which method you find the easiest?



Cling film over the toilet (remember to leave a dip)



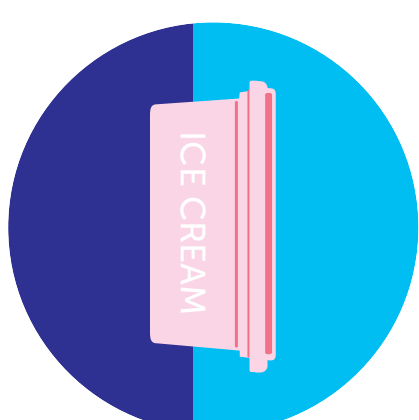
A carton that grapes come in



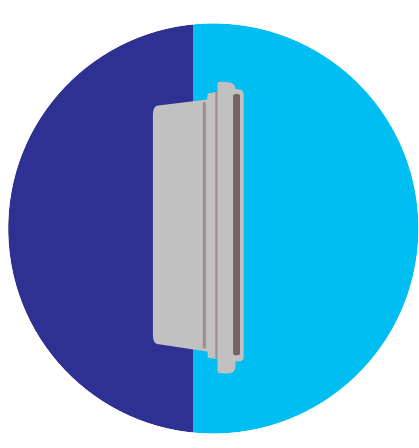
Folded toilet paper in your hand



A plastic bag over your hand, or a glove



A clean empty margarine or ice cream tub



A clean empty takeaway container

Welsh language version available online

Ref: BCSC-10-17 October 2017. Annually reviewed.
Registered Charity in England and Wales (1089464),
Scotland (SCO41556) and Isle of Man (1103)