

Bowel cancer risk assessment: average risk

This leaflet is for men and women with an **average risk** of bowel cancer (following a family history risk assessment).

It gives information on how common bowel cancer is, screening and what to look out for. If you have any further questions, please speak to a doctor, genetic counsellor or nurse caring for you.

Contact details

Clinic telephone number: _____

Seen in clinic by: _____

Date of risk assessment: _____

What is an average risk of bowel cancer?

Bowel cancer is a common disease. In the general population about 1 in 16 men and 1 in 20 women in the UK will develop bowel cancer.

Although bowel cancer is common, having an inherited tendency to developing bowel cancer is quite rare. Only about 5-10% of all bowel cancers happen because of an inherited tendency (also called a genetic predisposition).

An average risk of bowel cancer means that your risk of developing bowel cancer is estimated to be about the same as for any one else in the general population.

People with an average risk of developing bowel cancer are unlikely to have an inherited tendency to developing bowel cancer.

Do people with an average risk of bowel cancer need screening?

No additional screening is recommended other than the NHS Bowel Cancer Screening Programme. This service is being introduced across the country to people aged 60-69.

More details about the NHS Bowel Screening Programme can be found at **www.cancerscreening.nhs.uk/bowel** or call 0800 707 6060. If you require follow up appointments for bowel colonoscopy, your GP will need to refer you each time.

Diet and lifestyle

Research suggests that diet and lifestyle choices can contribute to bowel cancer risk. Cutting down on red meat, smoking and alcohol may help, along with eating plenty of fruit and vegetables, and exercising regularly.

What can I do to help?

There are a few things to look out for which can help with the early detection of bowel cancer:

- bleeding from the back passage other than from haemorrhoids (piles)
- change in toilet habits (for example, persistent diarrhoea/constipation)
- feeling of incomplete emptying of the bowel
- pain or discomfort in your abdomen.

If you experience any of these problems, do not panic. These symptoms can have a number of causes that are not related to cancer. If your symptoms last for two weeks or more, please tell your GP.

What if my family history of cancer changes?

Please let us know and we will see if this changes your risk assessment.

Useful contacts

Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

t: 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

To make comments or raise concerns about the Trust's services, please contact PALS. Ask a member of staff to direct you to the PALS office or:

t: 020 7188 8801 at St Thomas' **t:** 020 7188 8803 at Guy's **e:** pals@gstt.nhs.uk

NHS 111

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics.

Available over the phone 24 hours a day.

t: 111

Beating Bowel Cancer

t: 08450 719 301 **www.beatingbowelcancer.org.uk**

Macmillan Cancer Support

t: 0808 808 0000 **www.macmillan.org.uk**

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