

# Bowel cancer risk assessment: high moderate or increased risk

**This leaflet is for men and women with a **high moderate or increased** 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 a high moderate or increased 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).

A high moderate or increased risk of bowel cancer means that based on your family tree you are estimated to have a higher than average chance of getting bowel cancer during your lifetime. It is possible that the bowel cancer in your family is caused by an inherited tendency, but more information may be needed about cancer in your family before your risk assessment can be confirmed.

## **Do people with a high moderate or increased risk of bowel cancer need screening?**

Depending on your age and family history you may be offered bowel screening to check for changes in the bowel. This type of screening is known as a colonoscopy. You may be given a short-term screening plan until more details about your family tree can be confirmed.

Also, the NHS Bowel Cancer Screening Programme offers screening to people from 60-69 years. More details can be found at **[www.cancerscreening.nhs.uk/bowel](http://www.cancerscreening.nhs.uk/bowel)** or call 0800 707 60 60. 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 should I look out for?

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.

# Can I have a test to find out if the bowel cancer in my family is inherited?

Testing for an inherited tendency is available in some families. This depends on the exact details of your family tree and whether the necessary cancer tissue or blood samples are available.

Patients may attend a nurse-led family history clinic and then be referred to the genetics clinic to discuss testing. If you are seen in the genetics clinic we will explain the options available. If any testing does go ahead this could alter your risk assessment and screening recommendations.

## Useful contacts

### **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](http://www.beatingbowelcancer.org.uk)

### **Macmillan Cancer Support**

t: 0808 808 0000 [www.macmillan.org.uk](http://www.macmillan.org.uk)

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