



# 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 one in 14 men and one in 19 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 anyone 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 to 74.

More details about the NHS Bowel Screening Programme can be found at [www.cancerscreening.nhs.uk/bowel](http://www.cancerscreening.nhs.uk/bowel), or you can 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 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.

## **What if my family history of cancer changes?**

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

## Sources of further information

### Macmillan Cancer Support

t: 0808 808 0000

w: [www.macmillan.org.uk](http://www.macmillan.org.uk)

### Bowel Cancer UK

t: 020 7940 1760

w: [www.bowelcanceruk.org.uk](http://www.bowelcanceruk.org.uk)

Guy's and St Thomas' hospitals offer a range of cancer-related information leaflets for patients and carers, available at [www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/cancer-leaflets](http://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/cancer-leaflets). For information leaflets on other conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit w: [www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets](http://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets)

**Dimbleby  
Cancer  
Care**

**Dimbleby Cancer Care** provides cancer support services for Guy's and St Thomas'. We have a drop-in information area staffed by specialist nurses and offer complementary therapies, psychological support and benefits advice for patients and carers.

Dimbleby Cancer Care is located in the Welcome Village of the Cancer Centre at Guy's.

t: 020 7188 5918

e: [DimblebyCancerCare@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:DimblebyCancerCare@gstt.nhs.uk)

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A list of sources is available on request



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