



BOWEL CANCER SCREENING

It's not shame, it's part of life

Stay healthy and strong for your family and mob

Do the free bowel screening test





About our artwork

Our artwork represents the support and care provided by our community.

The central lines illustrate the digestive system. The circles represent the community's support for individual and cultural needs.

The people symbols (arches) represent those who provide care for individuals.

The lines and cross-hatching illustrate the strength and resilience of individuals and the community. The artwork's colours represent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Ownership of Supporting artwork

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Graphic design by Colleen Lourenco.



Bowel Cancer Screening

It's not shame, it's part of life

If you are between 45 years old and 74 years old, you should do a bowel screening test every 2 years.

This booklet tells you how.

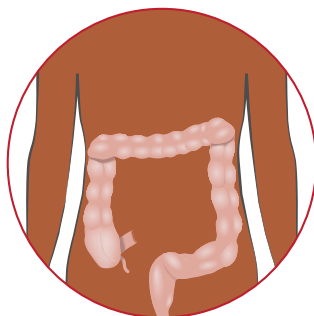
The test is easy to do. The test is free.



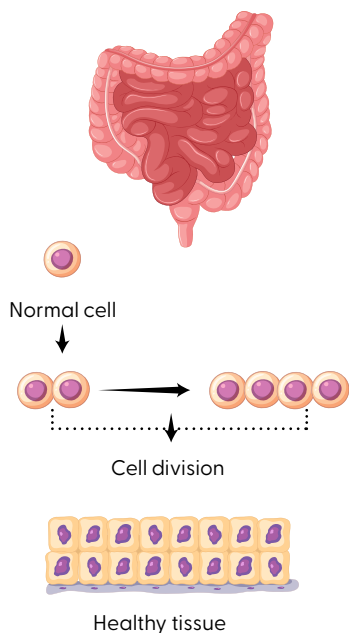
What is bowel cancer?

Your bowel is inside your stomach. It turns your food into stool.

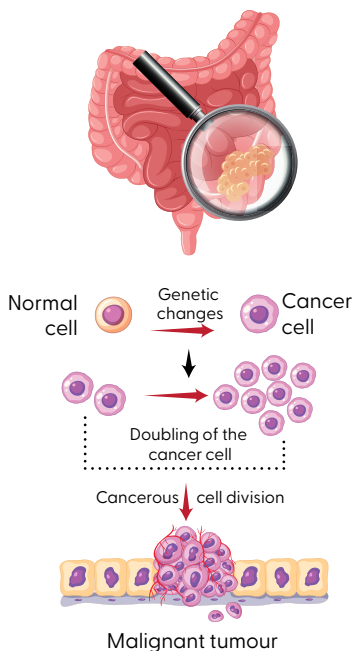
Bowel cancer is when cancer or bad cells start to grow inside the bowel. The cells can grow into a big lump that can make you very sick.



Normal cell development



Cancer cell development



A lot of people get bowel cancer

- » Most people cannot feel bowel cancer. If you have it, you might not know.
- » Bowel cancer can be treated if it is found early.
- » You can do an easy test to check for bowel cancer.



Who gets bowel cancer?

Most people who get bowel cancer are over 45 years old.

Your risk of bowel cancer is higher if:

- » Someone in your family had bowel cancer
- » You don't eat healthy food
- » You are overweight
- » You smoke
- » You drink a lot of alcohol
- » You don't exercise.

Remember that these things can increase your risk of bowel cancer. They don't mean you'll definitely get bowel cancer.

Causes & risks



Processed foods,
and a lot
of red meat



Obesity



Lack of exercise



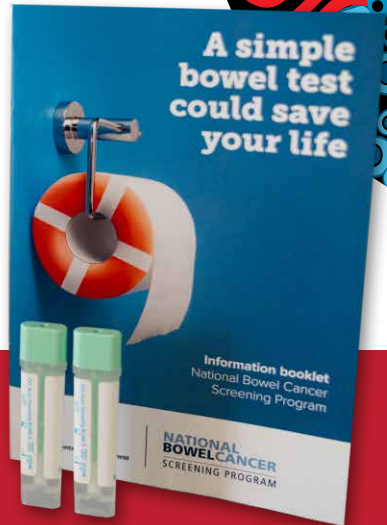
Alcohol and
smoking

How do I check if I have bowel cancer?

Most people cannot feel bowel cancer. When the cancer is small, most people do not feel sick.

A bowel screening test can check if you might have bowel cancer:

- » The test looks for blood in your stool.
- » The test is easy to do.
- » The test does not hurt.



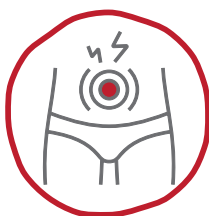
How do I know if I have bowel cancer?

The only way to check for bowel cancer early is to do the screening test. Most people cannot feel bowel cancer.

These are the signs to look for:



Feel tired for no reason



Have stomach pain



Have a sudden change in your stool



Can see blood in the stool



Losing weight without trying

Can I stop myself getting bowel cancer?

Anyone can get bowel cancer.

You have less chance of getting bowel cancer if you:

- » Eat healthy food like fruit and vegetables
- » Eat less red meat
- » Eat less processed meat like ham and bacon
- » Keep a healthy weight
- » Keep active
- » Quit smoking
- » Drink less alcohol.

If you are over 45 years old, you should do a bowel screening test every 2 years to check for bowel cancer.



Prevention



Eat healthy food,
avoid processed
foods, and limit
red meat



Drinks lots
of water



Healthy
Weight



Exercise



Avoid alcohol
and
quit smoking

If I feel healthy, should I still do the test?

Everyone who is over 45 years old should do the bowel screening test every 2 years.

- » The test is for people who do not know they have bowel cancer
- » The test looks for the early signs of cancer.
- » You cannot feel early bowel cancer
- » Most bowel cancer can be treated if it is found early



Are there any reasons why I should not do the test?

The test looks for blood in the stool, so talk to your doctor about the test if you have:

- » Piles (haemorrhoids) that are bleeding
- » Blood in your urine, stool or in the toilet bowl
- » Had a colonoscopy recently
- » Are being treated by a doctor for bowel problems.

Don't do the test while you have your monthly period. Wait for 3 days after your period finishes before doing the test.





What does the test look like?

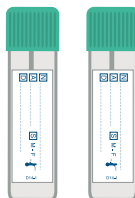


2 x toilet
liners

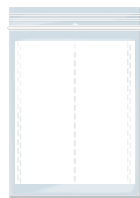
TOILET LINER

Flush down toilet
once sample taken

Biodegradable
This side up



2 x collection
tubes



1 x plastic
bag

1 x Reply Paid
envelope



Participant Details

Please complete and post this form with your completed test samples.
If you have any questions, please contact the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program Contact Centre 1800 627 781 or visit www.ncsr.gov.au
Please use a black pen and write in BLOCK LETTERS in the boxes provided.

1 Name and contact details

IMPORTANT:
The test should ONLY be completed by the person who received the bowel screening kit.

Family name
Given name(s)
Postcode
Work telephone
Home telephone
Email address
Mobile telephone

Changing your name and address details in the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program will not change your Medicare details. If you need to change your Medicare details please call 13 20 11.

2 Nominated doctor/medical practice details (a copy of your test results will be sent to this practice)

Doctor's family name
Doctor's given name
Medical Practice name
Medical Practice Address line 1
Address line 2
Suburb/Town/City
State
Postcode
Provider number (if known)

3 Test sample details (Participants, please record)

Date first sample collected (dd/mm/yyyy) / /
Date second sample collected (dd/mm/yyyy) / /

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Form to
complete

How do I do the bowel screening test?

The bowel screening test is easy to do.

You will get a test kit in the post. You can ask a doctor or nurse to give you a test kit.

You can do the test at home or at the health centre.

The test kit tells you what to do. Your doctor or nurse can show you how to do the test.

You will need to:

- » Do a stool
- » Put a tiny bit of stool on the plastic stick
- » Put the plastic stick into a tube
- » Do another stool at a different time
- » Put the second stool on the second plastic stick and put it into the second tube
- » Send the tubes to the lab for testing.



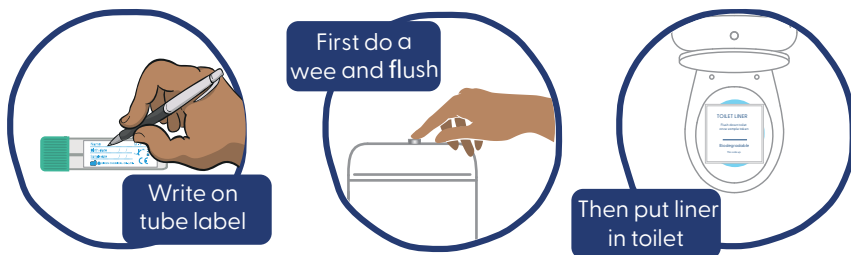
How to do the test

Before you do the test:

- » Keep taking your medication.
- » Eat what you normally do.
- » Put the test where you will remember to do it.

You need 2 tiny samples from 2 different stools

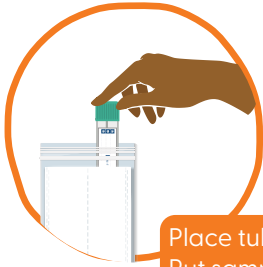
1. Prepare



2. Collect



3. Store & repeat

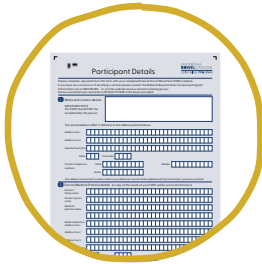


Place tube in bag
Put sample in fridge



Next poo, repeat
with second tube

4. Post your samples



Complete the participant
details form,
make sure you sign it



Fill out the
reply-paid envelope



Post the samples
as soon as you can



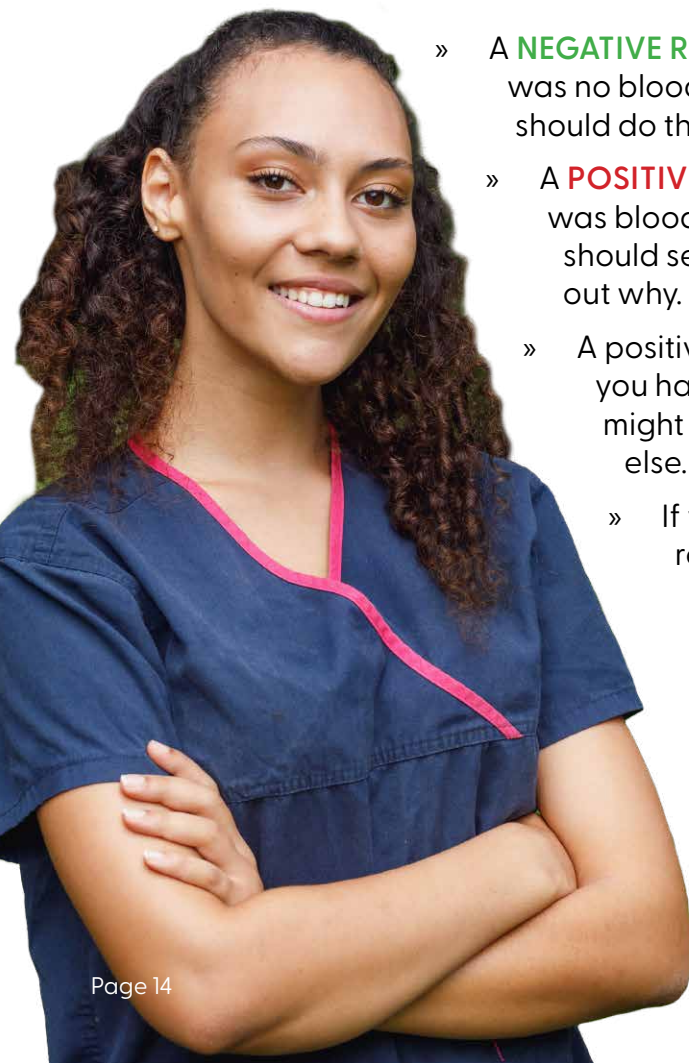
How will I get the results?

The test results will be ready in about 4 weeks.

The test results will be sent to you in the post. The test results will also be sent to your doctor.

What do the results mean?

- » A **NEGATIVE RESULT** means there was no blood in your stool. You should do the test again in 2 years.
- » A **POSITIVE RESULT** means there was blood in your stool. You should see the doctor to find out why.
- » A positive result does not mean you have cancer. The blood might be from something else.
- » If you get a positive result, see your doctor as soon as you can. Your doctor will arrange for a different test.



Where can I get more information?

Talk to your doctor, nurse, or health worker if you have questions about the bowel screening test or bowel cancer.

Scan the QR code to watch a short video about the test.



For questions about the kit, call the helpline:

1800 930 998

To order the kit or general questions about bowel screening, use the National Cancer Screening contact centre:

1800 627 701

www.health.gov.au/nbcsp



Stay healthy for you and your family

Do a bowel screening test today

Please feel free to share any questions you have with your doctor or health worker.





Produced by The University of Queensland in collaboration with The University of Sydney and Australian Unity. ©FNCWR February 2025.

This booklet aligns with the Australian Government's Bowel Cancer Screening Program and draws on earlier work developed by The Menzies School of Health Research.

For more information please visit the First Nations Cancer and Wellbeing Research Program website:
<https://public-health.uq.edu.au/research/fncwr>





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