

Bowel Cancer Screening - Frequently Asked Questions

How does the selection process work?

Individuals registered with a GP are sent a Faecal Immunochemical Test from the regional Hub in Gateshead.

Does the invitation system have my medical details?

No, the invitation system has no medical information on individuals, meaning we are not made aware of individuals who may already be undergoing investigations/treatment for bowel conditions. If you are unsure if you should complete your FIT kit, please contact the HUB on free phone 0800 707 6060.

What should I do if I'm concerned about symptoms but I'm under 60?

If you are under 60 and you are concerned about a symptom or family history then you should speak to your GP.

I'm in my sixties, what do I have to do to take part in the NHS Bowel Cancer Screening Programme?

You must ensure that you're registered with a GP and that your GP has your correct address and date of birth, this information will then be used by the HUB to invite participants. You will receive an invitation and FIT kit through the post.

I'm within the screening age range and I'm worried about symptoms so would like my kit early, is this possible?

No, the screening programme is designed to screen people with no symptoms. If you have symptoms or you are worried about your bowel health in any way, then you should not wait for screening but contact your GP.

It's more than two years since I was screened but I still haven't received my next FIT home test kit, why?

The two year gap between screening invitations is calculated from the date on which your previous screening episode was closed. In some cases, if you had further tests, this could be several months after you received your screening invitation.

Will the FIT home test kit tell me if I have cancer?

No, the FIT kit test does not diagnose bowel cancer; however the results of the test will show if there is any blood present in your samples and if so, you will need a colonoscopy examination.

How do I use the screening kit?

For information on using the FIT home test kit click on the link below from Public Health England <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bowel-cancer-screening-kit-how-to-use> or call free phone 0800 707 6060 and the telephonist will be able to advise.

I suffer from haemorrhoids (piles). Will this interfere with the screening test?

If you have haemorrhoids (piles) at the moment then there's more chance that you will get an abnormal result. An abnormal result may be due to blood from your haemorrhoids or from another bowel condition. Anyone with an abnormal result is offered a colonoscopy in order to get a diagnosis.

Can I bring a friend/family member/care with me when I attend clinic?

Yes, you can bring a friend/family member/carer to support you at your appointments.

English is not my first language; can I have support when attending my appointment?

Yes, please call the HUB on free phone 0800 707 6060 and we will arrange interpreter services for when you attend your appointment.

I have poor mobility and need help to complete the FIT home test kit, can you help?

Yes, please call the HUB on free phone 0800 707 6060 and we will arrange for one of our Specialist Screening Practitioners to help you complete the FIT home test kit.

I have a hearing or visual impairment, how will this affect my treatment?

Please call the HUB on free phone 0800 707 6060 prior to any appointments so we can arrange an interpreter to support you and ensure that we have all appropriate information (e.g. braille documents) or allocate additional time if needed.

I have had bowel surgery; do I need to continue with bowel screening?

Bowel screening is designed to check the health of the colon. If you have a colon you should complete the screening kit unless you are already in a surveillance programme. People with no colon do not need to be screened. If you are unsure whether you have a colon please see the FAQ, How can I tell if I have a colon?

How can I tell if I have a colon?

The colon is part of the digestive system and stores waste material before passing it out through the rectum. People who do not have a functioning colon cannot do this and need to make continuous use of a pouch/colostomy bag. You may have to use a colostomy bag temporarily, if so you should still be screened the usual way, when invited and once it is reversed. If, having read this, you are still unsure whether you have a functioning colon you should check with your GP prior to accepting a screening invitation.

I am a carer, looking after someone who lacks the mental capacity to make their own decisions about screening. They have been invited for screening. How should I deal with their invitation?

We recommend a discussion with their GP in the first instance, as he/she has access to their medical records and knowledge of their overall medical health. In general, however some people's mental capacity varies, in which case the decision about screening should be delayed until the individual is more able to decide for him or herself but if the person you care for is unable to make their own decisions about screening, then you, as their carer, should make what is called a 'best interests' decision on their behalf (just as you may be making other decisions about their care and treatment).

You will need to weigh up the benefits of screening, the possible harms, and what you think the person him or herself would have wanted. Paid carers in particular should get advice from family members or friends about the person's views before coming to a decision. Whether you are a paid carer, or an unpaid carer, family member or close friend, this process is the same. To find out more about the bowel cancer screening process call the free phone helpline for advice, on 0800 707 60 60.

What are the possible results and when will I receive them?

Normal result - which means no polyps or cancers were found. You will be sent another FIT kit in 2 years' time if you're still within the age range.

Polyps found – if the endoscopist finds any polyps these are normally removed straight away and sent to pathology to be checked, you will be told of this straight away. If polyps are sent to pathology these results can take 7 days and a Specialist Screening Practitioner (SSP) will call you with these results.

Cancer found – On rare occasions a cancer is found. Your endoscopist will arrange for you to meet with a specialist. You will be kept updated throughout the whole process and will be given a full overview of the results at the end of your procedure.