

# National Bowel Screening Programme

Quick Guide



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Screening  
Programme

## What is the National Bowel Screening Programme?

This is a free programme to help detect bowel cancer.

The National Bowel Screening Programme is being rolled out across New Zealand starting in 2017. It is being offered to men and women aged 60 to 74 who are eligible for publicly funded healthcare.

**Bowel screening is for people who don't have symptoms of bowel cancer. If you have any bowel symptoms that concern you, discuss these with your doctor. Don't wait to receive your free bowel screening test.**

When it's your turn to take part you'll be sent:

- an invitation letter
- a consent form
- a free bowel screening test kit

You'll receive your first invitation within two years of the programme starting in your area.

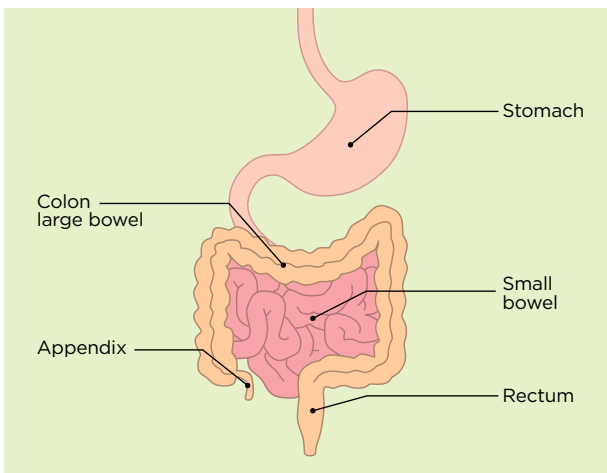
To find out when your District Health Board is joining the National Bowel Screening Programme, go to **[www.timetoscreen.nz](http://www.timetoscreen.nz)**.



## What is bowel cancer?

Bowel cancer is also called colon, rectal or colorectal cancer.

Bowel cancer starts when cells in the bowel begin to grow out of control. The cells can turn into a polyp (growth) and some polyps may eventually develop into cancer over a number of years.



## What are the symptoms?

Common symptoms of bowel cancer may include:

- a change in your normal pattern of going to the toilet that continues for several weeks
- blood in your bowel motion (poo)

Although these symptoms are usually caused by other conditions, **it's important to get them checked by your doctor.**



## Why is regular bowel screening important?

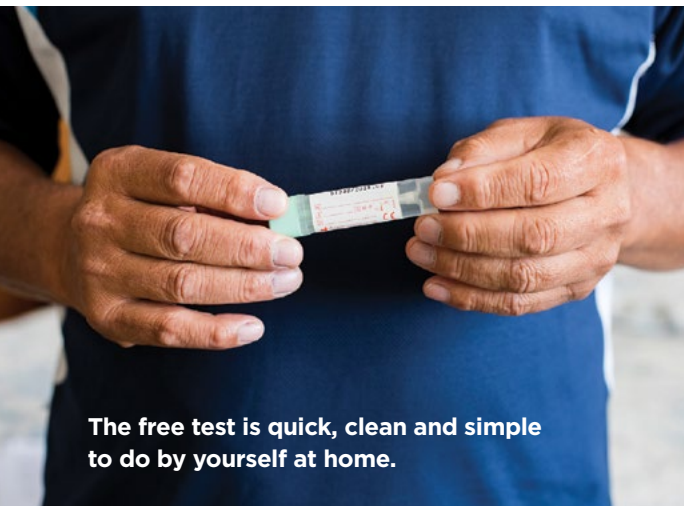
Bowel cancer is the second highest cause of cancer death in this country. Currently more than 3000 people are diagnosed with bowel cancer every year and more than 1200 die from the disease.

There may be no warning signs that you have bowel cancer. Bowel screening every two years can help detect cancer at an early stage, when it can often be successfully treated.

## What is the bowel screening test?

The test used by the National Bowel Screening Programme is a faecal immunochemical test (FIT). It can detect tiny traces of blood present in a small sample of your bowel motion (poo). This may be an early warning sign that something is wrong with your bowel.

If your test is positive it means you will need a further investigation. This will usually be a colonoscopy.



**The free test is quick, clean and simple to do by yourself at home.**

## **To do the test, you need to:**

- collect a small sample from your bowel motion (poo) using the test stick, and put it into the tube
- put the sample tube in the zip-lock bag provided, along with the signed and completed consent form
- return it in the Freepost envelope provided.

Within three weeks of returning your completed bowel screening kit you will be contacted about your result and told what this means for you.

If you are eligible to take part in the National Bowel Screening Programme, any follow-up tests or treatments within the public health system are **free**.



**You should see your doctor now if you have any bowel symptoms that concern you.**



## More information

For more information about the National Bowel Screening programme:

- please visit **[www.timetoscreen.nz](http://www.timetoscreen.nz)**
- free phone **0800 924 432**
- email **[info@bowelscreening.health.nz](mailto:info@bowelscreening.health.nz)**
- or talk to your doctor.

**[www.timetoscreen.nz](http://www.timetoscreen.nz)**



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