

# Bowel scope screening

## A new way to prevent bowel cancer



**Bowel cancer is Scotland's third most common cancer, with almost 4,000 people diagnosed every year. Both men and women are at risk. Bowel cancer is more common in older people – most people who get it are over the age of 55. People can be at risk of bowel cancer even when nobody else in the family has had cancer.**

## **Bowel scope screening – at a glance**

- As well as the home screening kit for bowel cancer, NHSScotland is now offering bowel scope screening to some men and women aged around 60.
- Bowel scope screening helps prevent bowel cancer by removing small growths (polyps) from the bowel before they could turn into cancer.
- It's a 15-minute procedure that could save your life.
- If we find bowel cancer early enough, there's more than a 90% chance of successful treatment. The sooner it's caught, the easier it is to treat.
- It's your choice whether to have bowel scope screening or not. This leaflet will help you decide.

## Why am I being offered bowel scope screening?

In Scotland, all men and women aged 50–74 are invited to take part in bowel screening every two years. This is done using a home screening kit, which can find cancer early and is estimated to prevent 150 deaths from bowel cancer every year.

Bowel scope screening is a tried and tested method of bowel screening that is known to be safe and effective. In order to further improve the NHSScotland Bowel Screening Programme, we are now also offering some men and women aged around 60 bowel scope screening. This will allow us to find out whether to offer the test to everyone in Scotland.

It's a new way to prevent bowel cancer. During the test, the doctor or nurse can see any small growths in the bowel (called polyps) that could eventually turn into cancer. These can usually be removed immediately.

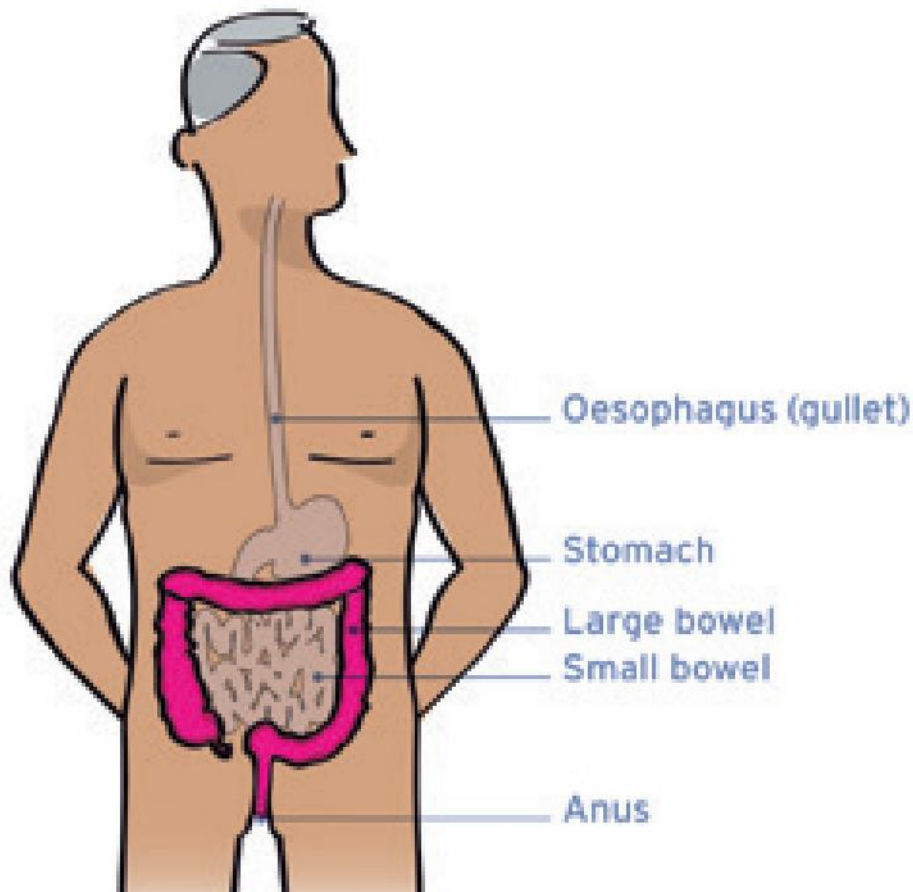


**Bowel scope screening does not replace the current home screening kit. Everyone who is offered bowel scope screening will continue to be sent a home screening kit as usual. The greatest benefit for you will come from taking part in both types of bowel screening.**

# What is bowel cancer?

The bowel, also known as the intestine, helps to digest the food you eat. After food has gone through the bowel, all that is left is bowel motion (poo).

The bowel has two parts – the small bowel and the large bowel. The large bowel is coloured pink in the picture below.



Bowel cancer is the term used for cancer that begins in the large bowel. It is also called colorectal cancer.



**Bowel cancer often starts from small growths in the bowel called polyps. Polyps do not usually cause symptoms, but some might turn into bowel cancer if they are not removed.**

## What is bowel scope screening?

Bowel scope screening uses a thin flexible tube with a tiny camera on the end to look at the lower part of the large bowel. It only takes 15 minutes and is a safe procedure.

It can find and remove small growths called polyps from the bowel. Bowel scope screening finds most, but not all, of the polyps that could turn into bowel cancer.

The technical term for bowel scope screening is flexible sigmoidoscopy screening (sometimes called 'flexisig').



**Bowel scope screening can halve the number of deaths from bowel cancer over 10 years.**

## What does bowel scope screening involve?

If you choose to have bowel scope screening, you will be contacted by your local NHS service to explain what the test involves and if it is appropriate for you to go ahead. They will also answer any questions you may have.

A suitable date and time will then be arranged for you to have the test. Before the test you will need to clean out your bowel using an enema, which will be posted to you with your appointment details. The enema is a liquid that is used to clear the poo out of the lower part of the large bowel. This makes it easier for the nurse or doctor to see the inside of your bowel. The enema comes in a small plastic pouch/bottle with a nozzle. Most people find it easy to use.

Bowel scope screening is done by a specially trained nurse or doctor. They will put the thin flexible tube into your bottom (back passage) and look inside the lower part of your large bowel using the tiny camera.

If they find any polyps, they may remove them straightaway or you may be asked to return for further tests to take a more detailed look at your bowel (called a colonoscopy, see page 8). Sometimes the nurse or doctor might need to take a tiny sample of the bowel (a biopsy) to be looked at under a microscope.

## **How long does bowel scope screening take?**

The bowel scope test itself will last around 15 minutes but you may be at the hospital for a couple of hours. You will be awake during this test.

## **What does bowel scope screening feel like?**

While it may be uncomfortable for a few minutes, most people feel glad that they had bowel scope screening. The nurse or doctor will help you feel as relaxed as possible and will explain each step as they go along.

## Does bowel scope screening have risks?

Bowel scope screening is an invasive procedure and, because of this, there can be complications. These are very rare and will be explained to you by the nurse or doctor before the procedure.

The main risks include:

- **Perforation**, which is a small tear or damage to the lining of the bowel. The risk of perforation is around 1 in 1000. The risk is higher if polyps are removed. An operation is nearly always needed to repair the tear.
- **Bleeding** from the place where a biopsy sample was taken or a polyp was removed. The risk of bleeding is around 1 in 100–200. In most cases the bleeding will simply stop on its own. If it doesn't, it can be treated during the procedure. In rare cases the bleeding may be severe and require further treatment in hospital.

When you go home after bowel scope screening, it is normal if you feel bloated for about 12 hours. It is rare to have complications following this procedure.

If you have severe abdominal (tummy) pain or a high temperature, pass large amounts of blood or experience vomiting then you should contact your GP or NHS 24 (by calling **111**) straightaway.

# What result might I get from bowel scope screening?

## Most people will have a normal result.

If you are given the all clear you will be told this straightaway. This means that no polyps or cancers were found.

## Some people will have polyps.

The nurse or doctor will usually remove any polyps they find. They will tell you straightaway if they have done this. Any polyps that are removed are sent to be checked under a microscope.

Because of the types of polyps found, between 10 and 20 people in 100 who have bowel scope screening will be offered a follow-up test called a colonoscopy to look at all of the large bowel.

A colonoscopy is similar to bowel scope screening. The difference is that in a colonoscopy the whole large bowel is examined. It takes about half an hour and is a safe procedure. The risks will be explained to you in detail if you need this test.

If you have questions or concerns about bowel scope screening, call the Bowel Screening Centre Helpline on **0800 0121 833** (textphone 18001 0800 0121 833). The helpline is open from 8 am to 6 pm, Monday to Friday.

You may also be asked to take a sensitive home screening kit, much like the home screening test kit you'll have been sent before, which you will be sent with instructions.

Very occasionally, some polyps cannot be removed using the bowel scope and some people may need an appointment with a surgeon to remove the polyps. This only happens to around 1 out of every 1000 people who have bowel scope screening.



If you have polyps removed during your test then, about **2–3 weeks after your appointment**, you will be sent another letter explaining the results of your screening and whether you need any further follow-up. Your GP will also get your results.

### **Rarely, the screening will find cancer.**

Out of 300 people who have bowel scope screening, it is likely that around 1 person will have bowel cancer already. If the screening does find cancer, the nurse or doctor will arrange for you to see a specialist as soon as possible. If cancer is found, it is likely to have been found at an early stage. This means you have a better chance of successful treatment and survival.

## **What if I have questions?**

If you have questions or concerns about bowel scope screening, please call the Bowel Screening Centre Helpline on **0800 0121 833** (textphone 18001 0800 0121 833) where trained staff will be able to guide you. The helpline is open from 8 am to 6 pm, Monday to Friday.

You can also visit

**[www.nhsinform.co.uk/screening/bowel/scope](http://www.nhsinform.co.uk/screening/bowel/scope)**

Remember, it's your choice whether or not to have bowel scope screening. Your decision will not affect any care you receive from your GP or hospital.



**Everyone who is offered bowel scope screening will continue to be sent a home screening kit as usual. The greatest benefit for you will come from taking part in both types of bowel screening.**

## What are the symptoms of bowel cancer?

Even if you have had bowel scope screening, it is important to look out for the symptoms of bowel cancer. You can still go on to get bowel cancer after having bowel scope screening. Also, bowel scope screening can sometimes miss polyps or cancer.



**These symptoms can be caused by a number of conditions, not just cancer. But if you've noticed any of these yourself, make an appointment to tell your GP:**

- **Repeated bleeding from your bottom or blood in your bowel motion (poo).**
- **A recent change in your bowel motion (poo) that continues every day for over 4 weeks, without going back to normal.**
- **Watery poo on its own or with constipation (constipation on its own is less likely to be serious).**
- **Severe pain in your stomach that won't go away, especially after eating.**
- **You've recently lost weight without trying.**
- **People say you look pale and you feel tired a lot.**

By offering some men and women bowel scope screening, we can find out whether to offer the test to everyone in Scotland. To help us decide, your medical records from the test will be available to people monitoring this process within NHSScotland. They will make sure that the process is fair and that everyone taking part is properly protected.

Before we started inviting people to take part in this screening, the NHS East of Scotland Research Ethics Committee checked and approved our plan from the point of view of medical ethics.

Material on page 4 is reproduced from 'NHS Bowel Screening Programme - Bowel scope screening', page 1, a publication of the national office of the NHS Cancer Screening Programmes (operated by Public Health England).

This publication is available online at **www.healthscotland.com** or telephone **0131 314 5300**.

## Traditional Chinese

您也可以登入 **www.healthscotland.com**  
瀏覽本刊物，或撥打 **0131 314 5300** 查詢。

## Polish

Ta publikacja jest dostępna online na stronie **www.healthscotland.com** lub pod numerem telefonu **0131 314 5300**, gdzie można także zgłaszać wszelkie zapytania.

## Urdu

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کسی سوالات کے لیے **0131 314 5300** پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔

This resource is available in Urdu, Chinese and Polish, and in an Easy Read format. NHS Health Scotland is happy to consider requests for other languages and formats.

Please contact **0131 314 5300** or email **nhs.healthscotland-alternativeformats@nhs.net**

**www.nhsinform.co.uk/screening/bowel/scope**