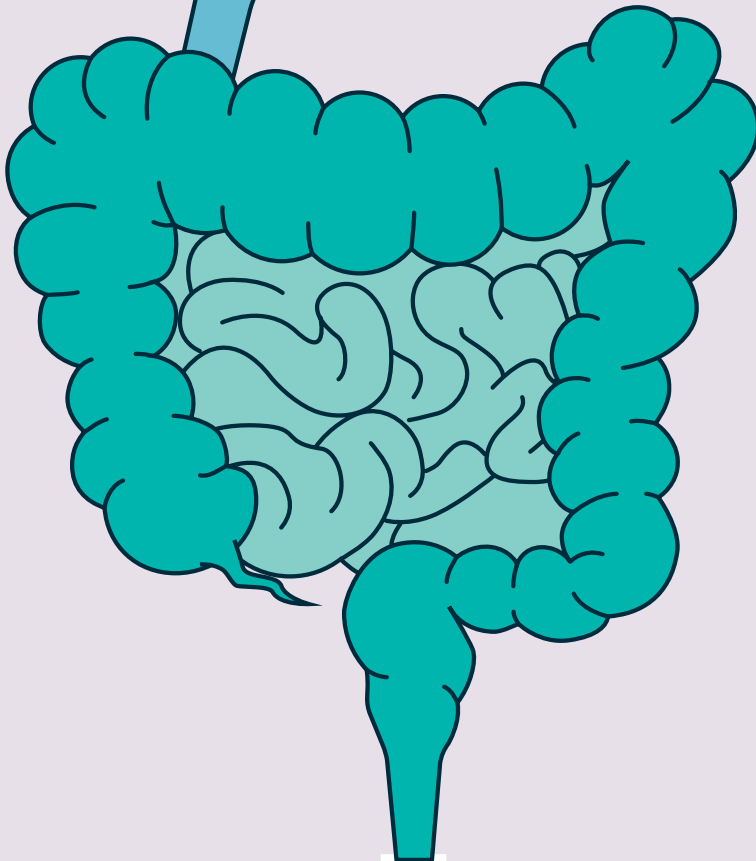




Bowel CancerUK
Beating bowel cancer together

What is bowel cancer?

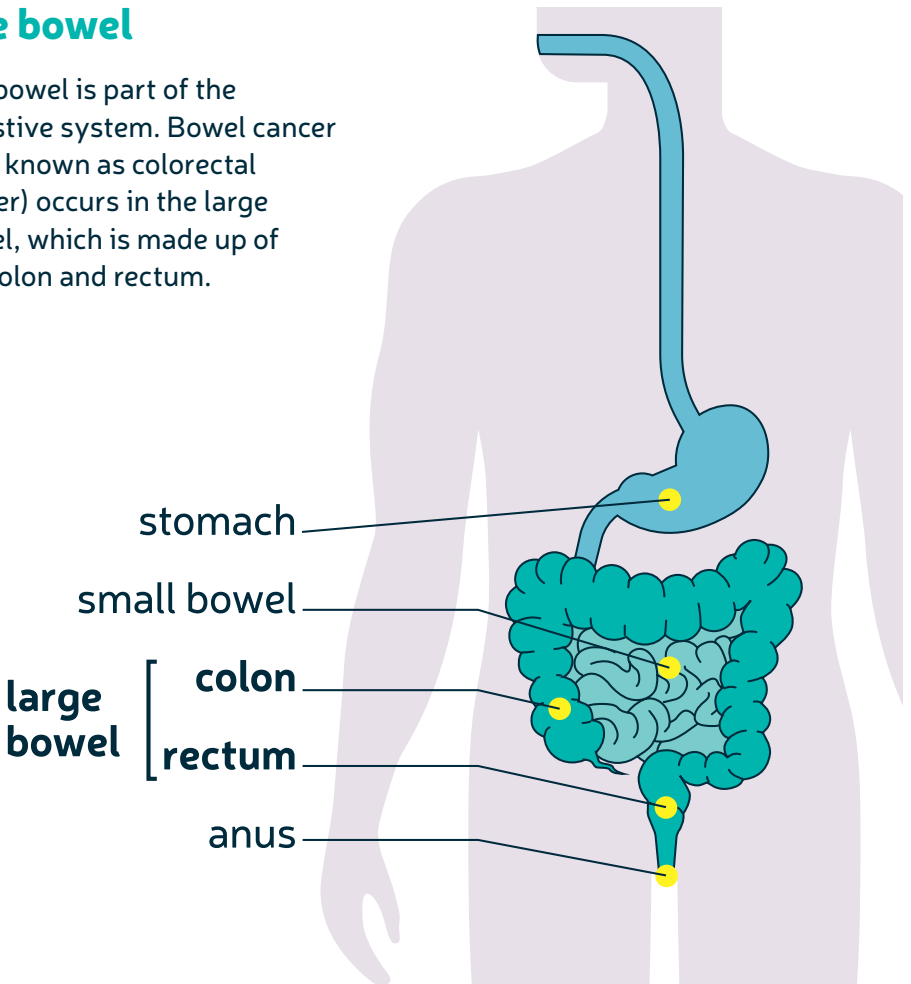
What it is, who's at risk and what to look out for



Bowel cancer is the fourth most common cancer in the UK and the second biggest cancer killer. Every year over 42,000 people are diagnosed with the disease. However, it is treatable and curable, especially if diagnosed early.

The bowel

The bowel is part of the digestive system. Bowel cancer (also known as colorectal cancer) occurs in the large bowel, which is made up of the colon and rectum.



What is bowel cancer?

Most bowel cancers develop from pre-cancerous growths, called polyps. But not all polyps will develop into cancer. Most people won't know they have polyps, as they don't normally cause any symptoms.

Larger polyps can sometimes cause symptoms like bleeding from your bottom, blood in your poo, a production of mucus when you go to the toilet, diarrhoea or constipation

and tummy pain. You should visit your GP if you are worried about any symptoms.

Polyps are usually found during an examination of the inside of the bowel or as part of the bowel cancer screening programme. If your doctor finds any polyps, they can remove them to lower the risk of bowel cancer developing.

Nearly everyone diagnosed at the earliest stage will survive bowel cancer for at least five years, but this drops significantly as the disease develops.



Stage 1
Around 9 in 10 will survive



Stage 4
Around 1 out of 10 will survive

Who is at risk?

You are more at risk of getting bowel cancer if you have one or more of the following risk factors:

- **Are 50 or over** – the risk of bowel cancer increases with age, but it can affect people of any age
- **A strong family history** of bowel cancer
- **A genetic condition** linked to bowel cancer such as Lynch syndrome
- **Non-cancerous growths** (polyps) in your bowel
- **Longstanding inflammatory bowel disease** such as Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis
- **Type 2 diabetes**
- **An unhealthy lifestyle** – your diet, drinking alcohol, smoking and not being physically active can all increase your risk

Having risk factors doesn't mean that you will definitely get bowel cancer. Equally, if you don't have any risk factors, it doesn't mean you won't get bowel cancer.

Bowel cancer screening

If you are aged 60–74 (50–74 in Scotland) and registered with your GP you'll receive an NHS screening test in the post every two years.

Screening can detect tiny amounts of blood in poo, which can't normally be seen. Bowel cancer screening could save your life.

Find out more

For more information call the bowel screening helpline for your country:

England: 0800 707 6060

Scotland: 0800 0121 833

Wales: 0800 294 3370

Northern Ireland: 0800 015 2514

Symptoms to look out for

The symptoms of bowel cancer can include:



Bleeding from your bottom and/or blood in your poo



A persistent and unexplained change in bowel habit



Unexplained weight loss



Extreme tiredness for no obvious reason



A pain or lump in your tummy

Most people with these symptoms don't have bowel cancer. Other health problems can cause similar symptoms.

If you're worried about any symptoms, don't be embarrassed to visit your GP. They are used to seeing lots of people with bowel problems.

More information

Our website has more information about what to expect when you visit your GP. Don't worry about wasting their time. If you're worried that something is wrong, they will want to see you.

Your GP may be able to put your mind at rest. If you do have a medical problem, the earlier you get a diagnosis, the better the chance of successful treatment.

Find out more at bowelcanceruk.org.uk

Bowel Cancer UK is the UK's leading bowel cancer charity. We're determined to save lives and improve the quality of life of everyone affected by the disease.

We support and fund targeted research, provide expert information and support to patients and their families, educate the public and professionals about bowel cancer and campaign for early diagnosis and access to best treatment and care.

To donate or find out more visit
bowelcanceruk.org.uk

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Please contact us if you have any comments about the information in this booklet: feedback@bowelcanceruk.org.uk