

## What should I look out for?

It is important to know what is normal for you so that you can spot any changes.

If you notice any of these symptoms and they last longer than four to six weeks, tell your doctor:

- bleeding from the bottom without any obvious reason
- a persistent change in bowel habit to looser or more frequent bowel motions
- tummy pain, especially if severe
- a lump in your tummy

These symptoms are unlikely to be caused by cancer but it is better to play safe.

## Screening

From 2006 men and women between 60 and 69 in England will be offered bowel screening every two years. The screening programme will be introduced in Scotland from 2007.

People who are registered with a doctor should receive their first invitation by 2009. They will be sent a screening kit so they can do the test at home.

Bowel screening aims to find cancers at an early stage when treatment is simpler and more effective. It can also find growths in the bowel which are not cancer but can develop into cancer. Screening saves lives.

## Further information

For more about cancer visit our patient information website [www.cancerhelp.org.uk](http://www.cancerhelp.org.uk) click on 'specific cancers' then 'bowel cancer'.

If you want to talk in confidence about cancer call our information nurses on 020 7061 8355.

Our health messages are based on scientific evidence. Find out more at [www.cancerresearchuk.org/health](http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/health) and click on 'How do we know?'.

To order copies of this and other cancer awareness leaflets email [publications@cancer.org.uk](mailto:publications@cancer.org.uk)

## About Cancer Research UK

Cancer Research UK is the leading charity dedicated to research on the causes, treatment and prevention of cancer. If you would like to support our work please call **020 7121 6699** or visit our website.

[www.cancerresearchuk.org](http://www.cancerresearchuk.org)

Bobby Moore was just 51 when he died from bowel cancer in 1993. Since its launch, the **Bobby Moore Fund** for Cancer Research UK has raised over £5 million for research into the prevention, screening and cure of bowel cancer. For more information please visit [www.bobbymoorefund.org](http://www.bobbymoorefund.org)



CANCER RESEARCH UK



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# preventing bowel cancer

how to **reduce** your risk



...and spot the symptoms early

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## Bowel cancer facts

Bowel cancer is the third most common cancer in the UK, after breast and lung cancer. Almost 100 people are diagnosed with the disease every day. It affects similar numbers of men and women.

When bowel cancer is found early, around nine out of ten people can be cured.

This leaflet contains information about how to reduce your risk of bowel cancer and describes the early symptoms of the disease.

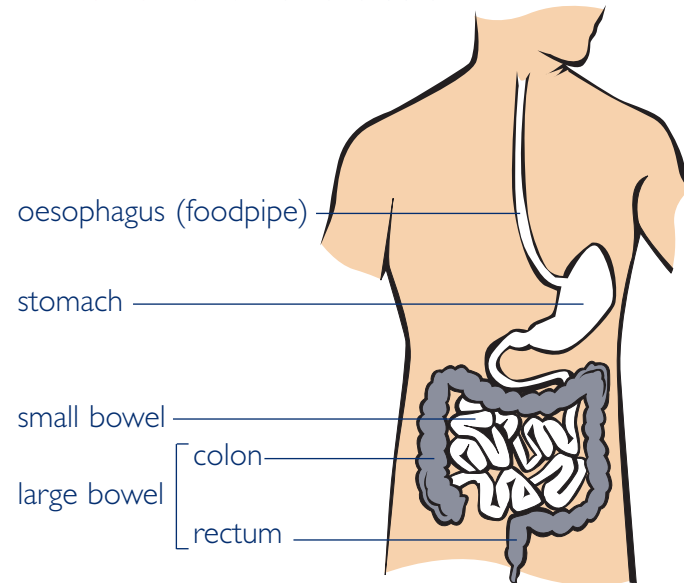
## The bowel

The bowel is divided into two parts, the small bowel and the large bowel. Cancer of the small bowel is very rare so the term bowel cancer nearly always means cancer of the large bowel.

The large bowel is made up of the colon and the rectum. The food we eat ends up in the large bowel. Here water and some nutrients are absorbed, leaving waste. Waste passes through the rest of the large bowel before leaving the body.



## Where is the bowel?



## Who is most at risk?

Like most cancers, the risk of bowel cancer increases with age. More than 9 out of 10 cases are in people over 50. But the habits you adopt earlier in life can have a big effect on your risk later on.

Around 1 in 20 cases occur in people with a strong family history of bowel cancer. If a close relative had bowel cancer you may have a slightly increased risk. If you are worried, discuss this with your doctor.

Some inflammatory bowel conditions, such as ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease increase the risk of bowel cancer. People with a rare disease called familial adenomatous polyposis also have a higher risk of bowel cancer.

## Reduce your risk

Bowel cancer is largely preventable. Around two-thirds of cases could be prevented by lifestyle changes.

To reduce your risk of bowel cancer:

- Try to do at least half an hour of moderate physical activity five times a week. The more active you are, the more you cut your risk of bowel cancer.
- Maintain a healthy body weight.
- Boost the fibre in your diet by choosing wholegrain varieties of bread, cereals, rice and pasta whenever possible.
- Eat smaller and fewer portions of red and processed meat.
- Try to eat more fish instead. When poached or baked it is particularly good for you.
- Eat at least five portions of fruit and vegetables every day.
- Follow our alcohol guidelines:  
Women should drink less than 2 units per day  
Men should drink less than 3 units per day
- Stop smoking. Smoking is a major cause of at least twelve types of cancer, including bowel cancer.

## Early detection saves lives

When bowel cancer is caught early, treatment is simpler and more effective and many people can be cured.