Screening saves lives
Bowel screening is used to check for early signs of bowel cancer by looking for hidden traces of blood in your stools.

There is a national bowel screening programme for older men and women. They will receive a screening kit that can be used at home. Samples are sent away for testing.

- In Scotland, people aged 50–74 are offered screening.
- In England and Northern Ireland, people aged 60–69 are offered screening.
- In England the screening age is being extended to 74.
- In Wales, people aged 60–74 are offered screening.

In England, if you are older than this you won’t automatically receive a screening kit, but you can still take part in bowel cancer screening. You can call freephone 0800 707 6060 to request a free kit.

When bowel cancer is caught early there is a better chance of beating the disease.

For more information about the bowel screening programme visit spotcancerearly.com

The Bobby Moore Fund
Bobby Moore, who will always be remembered for captaining England to World Cup glory in 1966, tragically died of bowel cancer, aged just 51. The Bobby Moore Fund was established by Stephanie Moore MBE, in partnership with Cancer Research UK, in 1993. It aims to fund cutting edge bowel cancer research and raise awareness of the high risk symptoms of bowel cancer.

For more information, please visit bobbymoorefund.org

Further information
For more about screening and the signs and symptoms of cancer visit spotcancerearly.com

For more about cancer visit our patient information website cruik.org/cancer-help

If you want to talk in confidence about cancer, call our information nurses on freephone 0808 800 4040.

Our health messages are based on scientific evidence. Find out more at cruik.org/health

All our leaflets are thoroughly researched and based on the most up-to-date scientific evidence. They are reviewed by independent experts and updated regularly. You can order our full range of leaflets free online at cruik.org/leaflets

About Cancer Research UK
CRUK pioneers life-saving research to bring forward the day when all cancers are cured. From our volunteers and supporters to our scientists, doctors and nurses, we’re all here to save more lives and prevent, control and cure all cancers. If you would like to support our work, please call 0300 123 1861 or visit our website cruik.org

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The bowel
The bowel is divided into two parts, the small bowel and 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.

Bowel cancer (sometimes called large bowel or colorectal cancer) means cancer of the colon or rectum. It doesn’t include cancers of the small bowel.

How can you reduce your risk?
Many cases of bowel cancer are linked to lifestyle.

To reduce the 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 the risk of bowel cancer
- keep a healthy weight
- eat smaller and fewer portions of red and processed meat
- boost the amount of fibre in your diet. Try to eat at least five portions of fruit and vegetables each day and choose wholegrain bread, cereals, rice and pasta
- cut down on alcohol. There is limited risk if you drink within the guidelines – around one standard drink a day (2-3 units) for women or two standard drinks a day (3-4 units) for men. But the more you cut down, the more you reduce the risk
- be a non-smoker. If you smoke, it is never too late to stop. The earlier you quit, the better.

Who is most at risk?
Like most cancers, the risk of bowel cancer increases with age. More than seven in 10 cases are in people over 65. But the habits you adopt earlier in life can have a big effect on your risk later on.

Around one in 10 bowel cancers are linked to specific genetic conditions. And having a family history of bowel cancer is linked to a higher risk of the disease.

Certain bowel conditions such as ulcerative colitis and Crohn’s disease also increase the risk of bowel cancer.

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 three weeks, tell your doctor:
- bleeding from the bottom without any obvious reason or blood in your poo
- 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.