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
Bowel screening for older men and women is gradually rolling out across England, Wales and Scotland.

Men and women who are eligible for screening and are registered with a doctor will receive an invitation letter and a screening kit so that 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.

For more about cancer visit our patient information website 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 freephone 0808 8004040.

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

You can order our full range of leaflets free online at www.cancerresearchuk.org/leaflets

About Cancer Research UK
Cancer Research UK is the world’s leading charity dedicated to finding out how to prevent, diagnose and treat cancer. If you would like to support our work, please call 020 7121 6699 or visit www.cancerresearchuk.org

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. The objectives of the Fund are to raise money for cutting edge bowel cancer research and raises awareness of the high risk symptoms of bowel cancer. For more information, please visit www.bobbymoorefund.org

Together we will beat cancer

Ref: ED076B. April 2009. Registered charity no 1089464.
Bowel cancer facts

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

When bowel cancer is found early more than eight out of 10 people can be treated successfully.

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.

Who is most at risk?

Like most cancers, the risk of bowel cancer increases with age. More than nine 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 a third of bowel cancer cases are linked to a strong family history of the disease. Some of these people are born with a rare genetic condition that puts them at a very high risk of developing bowel cancer. The rest are at increased risk because of a combination of faulty genes passed on through their family.

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

How can you 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.
• Keep a healthy weight.
• 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.
• 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.
• Cut down on alcohol. There is limited risk if you drink only a small amount, such as one small drink a day for women or two small drinks a day for men. But the more you cut down, the more you reduce your risk.

Early detection saves lives

When bowel cancer is caught early, treatment is simpler and more effective.