

WHAT IS THE STOOL TEST?

The stool test is meant to detect faecal blood that is invisible to the naked eye.

Blood in your stool may indicate the presence of bowel cancer or colonic polyps. In the latter case early detection and treatment can prevent bowel cancer from developing.



CONSULT YOUR GP FIRST:

- if you notice anything unusual like:
 - blood or mucus in your stool;
 - a change in your usual stool pattern;
 - frequent abdominal pain or cramps;
 - the urge to go to the toilet, without a real need;
 - unexplained loss of weight;
- if your GP informed you that you run a higher risk of bowel cancer;
- if several close relatives (parents, brothers, sisters or children) have had bowel cancer.

WHAT IS THE BOWEL CANCER SCREENING PROGRAMME?

The Bowel Cancer Screening Programme offers men and women aged 50 to 74 the opportunity to have a stool sample tested every two years. They will receive a letter containing a sampling kit. A lab working under strict guidelines will test the sample. This bowel cancer screening is free of charge.

This programme aims to prevent bowel cancer or detect it at an early stage and consequently reduce the number of men and women dying from this type of cancer.

This programme ensures the quality of the screening and accurate monitoring of all results.

DO YOU HAVE QUESTIONS?

For more information you can:

- contact your **GP or gynaecologist**;
- visit **www.bevolkingsonderzoek.be**;
- call the freephone number **0800 60 160**.

It is up to you to decide whether or not to join this programme. Make sure you are well informed. Visit www.bevolkingsonderzoek.be/dikkedarmkanker.

The stool test

WE DO IT. HOW ABOUT YOU?



EARLY
DETECTION
IS VITAL

Information on the Bowel Cancer Screening Programme for men and women aged 50 to 74.

THE STOOL TEST

You can do it at home

You will receive the sampling kit with an invitation letter. Carefully read the enclosed instructions. You can watch an instructional video on www.bevolkingsonderzoek.be/dikkedarmkanker/onderzoek.

Some people find taking a stool embarrassing. Fortunately the sampling procedure takes hardly any time at all.

Free

The stool sampling kit and the stool lab tests are free of charge.

Waiting for the result

About two weeks after sending your sample to the lab, you and your GP will receive a letter with the results. Generally, no anomalies are found and no additional testing is required. After two years you will receive a new invitation letter and sampling kit. Consult your GP if you have any complaints in the meantime.

Additional testing

If the test revealed that you have too much blood in your stool, additional testing is advised.

This may seem alarming at first, but it does not mean you have bowel cancer.

In order to find what caused the presence of faecal blood, you will need an examination of your bowel, a so-called colonoscopy. Make an appointment with your GP to discuss the additional examination and assess the risks and costs.

The results

No test is one hundred percent accurate. It is possible traces of blood were found without there being anything wrong. It is also possible that even though no faecal blood was detected, you still develop polyps or bowel cancer later. In the former case you worried for no reason. In the latter case the test was wrongly reassuring. Unfortunately this cannot be avoided.

Joining this Bowel Cancer Screening Programme is not advised:

- if you have bowel cancer (up to ten years after the diagnosis);
- if you have already had your stool tested in the past two years;
- if you have had a colonoscopy or bowel examination in the past ten years.



WHAT IS BOWEL CANCER?

Bowel cancer is a malignant tumour in the colon. It is the second most common type of cancer in men and women.

Bowel cancer develops very gradually and often starts out as polyps. Polyps do not cause discomfort, but can develop into bowel cancer without you ever noticing. Exactly why people get polyps and why they sometimes develop into bowel cancer, is not always clear. Polyps can be surgically removed.

Most people who develop bowel cancer make a full recovery. **The sooner bowel cancer is detected and treated, the better the chances of fully recovering.**

That is why this programme is so valuable.