

For more information:

If you need more advice about any aspect of bowel cancer, you are welcome to contact:

Clinical Genetics Departments

Northern Scotland (main base Aberdeen)
Tel: 01224 552120 Fax: 01224 559390
(Aberdeenshire, Moray, Highland, Western & Northern Isles)

Tayside (main base Dundee)
Tel: 01382 632035 Fax: 01382 645731
(Perth & Kinross, Angus, North East Fife)

South East Scotland (main base Edinburgh)
Tel: 0131 651 1012 Fax: 0131 651 1013
(Borders, Lothian, South West Fife)

West of Scotland (main base Glasgow)
Tel: 0141 201 0808 Fax: 0141 201 0361
(Glasgow, Argyll & Bute, Ayrshire, Dumfries & Galloway, Stirling, Lanarkshire, Falkirk)

If you need more advice about cancer and support groups, please contact:

Maggies Centres

www.maggiescentres.org

Maggies Highlands Tel: 01463 706302

Maggies Dundee Tel: 01382 496384

Maggies Edinburgh Tel: 0131 5373131

Maggies Glasgow Tel: 0141 330 3311

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Seen in clinic by.....

Bowel Cancer in the Family



Information for people
with an average risk of
bowel cancer

Bowel cancer in the family - what does this mean for you?

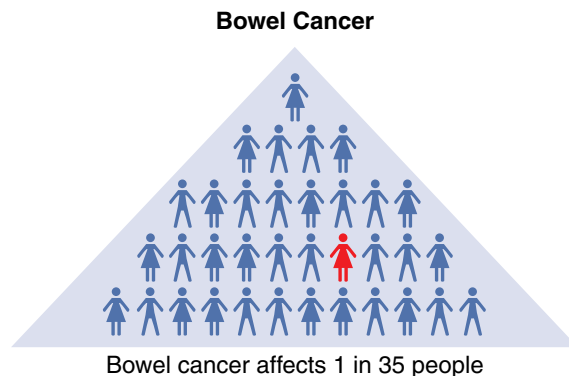
You may have heard about inherited bowel cancer. This can be very confusing and alarming.

As bowel cancer is a fairly common type of cancer, some of us will either know someone who has had bowel cancer or have a relative with bowel cancer. Most of those people **do not** have an "inherited" type of bowel cancer.

This leaflet aims to answer some of the questions that you may have about your family history of bowel cancer.

How common is bowel cancer?

In the UK, bowel cancer is the third most common type of cancer and affects about 1 person in 35 (both men and women) during their lifetime. However, most people get bowel cancer in later life.



What is inherited bowel cancer?

A very small number (about 5%) of people who develop bowel cancer have an inherited tendency to get this type of cancer.

What type of family history suggests an inherited tendency to get bowel cancer?

It is **very rare** to have an inherited tendency to develop bowel cancer.

This generally only occurs in families where:

- At least three close relatives (usually on the same side of the family) have developed bowel cancer at a relatively young age (under the age of 45).
- At least two close relatives (usually on the same side of the family) have developed bowel cancer at a young age and another close relative has developed another type of cancer such as endometrial cancer (cancer of the womb), ovarian cancer, stomach or bladder cancer.
- At least one person in the family has developed hundreds of polyps in their bowel (known as polyposis).

If you have been told that your lifetime risk of developing bowel cancer is **average** this means that it is **unlikely** that the bowel cancer in your family is due to an inherited tendency.

What is "average" risk of bowel cancer?

If you are at average risk of developing bowel cancer, your chances of getting this type of cancer during your lifetime are no different, or not much different, from the chances for any other person in the general population.

Do people with a average risk of bowel cancer need screening?

People at average risk **do not** need to have bowel screening. As for other people in the general population, a varied diet which is high in fibre and fresh vegetables may reduce the chance of developing colon cancer. Cutting down on red meat may also help.

What should you do if someone else in your family gets bowel cancer or another type of cancer?

This may not alter your risk of developing cancer. However, if you let us know we will look at your family history again.

What can you do to keep a check on yourself?

There are a few things to look out for which can help with the early detection of bowel cancer:

- Bleeding from the back passage (not from haemorrhoids/ piles).
- Change in toilet habits (e.g. persistent diarrhoea/constipation).
- Feeling of incomplete emptying of the bowel.
- Pain or discomfort in your abdomen.

If you experience any of the above symptoms, do not panic because these symptoms are often associated with other problems such as haemorrhoids. If these symptoms last for two weeks or more, it is important to make an appointment with your GP to have your symptoms investigated.

It is important to remember that most bowel cancer is **not inherited**.