

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

This may not alter your risk of developing a cancer. However, please let us know and 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 these 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.

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, Argyshire, 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

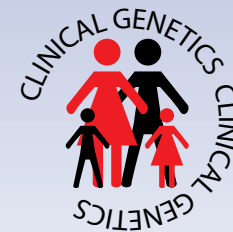
Maggies Edinburgh Tel: 0131 5373131

Maggies Glasgow Tel: 0141 330 3311

Seen in clinic by.....

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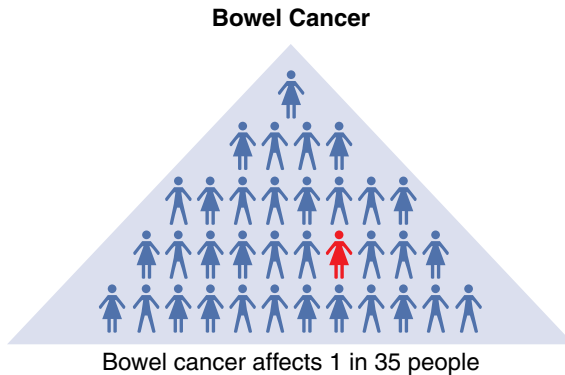
Bowel Cancer in the Family



Information for people at a moderately increased lifetime risk of bowel cancer

How common is bowel cancer?

Bowel cancer is the third most common cancer in the UK and affects about 1 in 35 people (both men and women). Bowel cancer is also known as **colorectal** or **colon cancer** because most tumors (cancers) occur in the colon or rectum.



What is inherited bowel cancer?

Many of us will know someone who has had bowel cancer. Most of the time bowel cancer occurs in a family by chance. However, approximately 5% (1 in 20) of people with bowel cancer have an inherited tendency to develop this disease.

What type of family history is associated with an inherited form of bowel cancer?

It is important to remember that it is **very rare** to have an inherited form of bowel cancer.

It generally only occurs in families where:

- At least three close relatives (on the same side of the family) have developed bowel cancer at a young age (under the age of 45).

- At least two close relatives (on the same side of the family) have developed bowel cancer at a young age and another close relative has developed a different

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 **moderately** increased, it is still **unlikely** that the bowel cancer in your family is an inherited form of bowel cancer.

People with an inherited form of bowel cancer have a faulty gene in their body cells which means they are more likely than most people to develop bowel cancer. This gene can be passed from one generation to the next.

What is a "moderately increased" risk of developing bowel cancer?

If you are at moderately increased risk, this means that you have an increased chance of getting bowel cancer during your lifetime.

Your increased chance of getting bowel cancer is likely to be due to a number of faulty genes in the family, which we do not yet know about, together with environmental factors such as diet.

A moderately increased risk of developing bowel cancer means that you are more likely NOT to get bowel cancer than you are to get it.

Do people with a moderately increased risk of developing bowel cancer need bowel screening?

If you have a moderately increased risk of developing bowel cancer, you may be offered bowel screening to check for any abnormal changes in the bowel. This type of screening is known as a **colonoscopy**

What is a colonoscopy?

A colonoscopy is a test which allows the doctor to look directly at the lining of the large bowel (the colon). In order to do the test, a colonoscope is carefully passed through the anus into the large bowel. The colonoscope is a large flexible tube, about the thickness of your index finger, with a bright light at the end. Looking down the tube, the doctor gets a clear view of the lining of the bowel and can check whether or not any disease is present. Sometimes the doctor takes a biopsy - a sample of the lining for examination in the laboratory. A small piece of tissue is removed painlessly through the colonoscope, using tiny forceps.

It is possible to remove polyps during the colonoscopy. Polyps are abnormal projections of tissue, rather like warts, which can become cancerous over time.

