

## UK NSC HTML Bowel cancer screening and the permanent discontinuation of bowel scope in the English Bowel Screening Programme

### **Recommendation to stop bowel scope screening in England**

In England, bowel scope screening was offered as a one-off test from 55 years old. This was alongside the previous bowel cancer screening test, the guaiac faecal occult blood test (gFOBT), offered at 60 years old. FIT screening then replaced gFOBT in 2018.

From 2018 in England, both bowel scope screening and FIT screening were offered. However, the uptake of bowel scope continued to be variable. FIT was shown to be more acceptable to the population and to detect more cancers throughout the bowel.

The UK NSC recommends that bowel scope screening should stop permanently, and the NHS Bowel Cancer Screening Programme should focus attention on expanding FIT screening. This is because:

- FIT screening from 50 years old (reduced from 60 years old) is effective in reducing deaths from bowel cancer and may also help prevent it
- it is unclear whether offering both bowel scope and FIT screening to people from 50 years old provides additional benefit to FIT testing alone - further research would be needed to find this out
- the bowel scope test is intrusive and difficult to implement
- all bowel cancer screening was temporarily suspended during the COVID-19 pandemic and stopping bowel scope screening permanently will allow service providers to focus on restoring screening

The UK NSC recognises that stopping bowel scope screening will make research into its benefits more difficult in future. However, based on the effectiveness of FIT screening the UK NSC considers focusing purely on this test to be the best approach.

Further information on the decision to stop bowel scope screening is available in the [July 2020 meeting minutes](#).