



UK NSC bowel cancer recommendation

The UK NSC recommends a change to the primary test used in the NHS Bowel Cancer Screening Programme from guaiac faecal occult blood testing (gFOBt) to faecal immunochemical testing (FIT).

Bowel cancer remains a significant health problem in the UK. Over 41,000 people are diagnosed with it each year and 16,000 people die from it. It is the fourth most common cancer and the second biggest cancer killer in the UK. We know that if found early treatments are more effective and can save or prolong life.

The three main symptoms of bowel cancer are blood in the stools (faeces), changes in bowel habit (such as more frequent, looser stools) and abdominal (tummy) pain.

Eight out of 10 people with bowel cancer are over 60 years old. Screening is routinely offered every two years to men and women between the ages of 60-74. People over the invitation age range can self-refer.

The introduction of FIT into the screening programme provides further opportunity to detect and prevent more cancers.

Key findings supporting the UK NSC recommendation

- FIT is easier to use and can be measured more reliably using a machine rather than the human eye
- FIT is sensitive to much smaller amount of blood than gFOBt and therefore can detect cancers more reliably and at an earlier stage
- the increased sensitivity enables FIT to detect more pre-cancer lesions (advanced adenomas)
- FIT requires a single faecal sample and is more acceptable to invited subjects which markedly increases participation rates
- FIT is a cost effective alternative to gFOBt

The UK NSC regularly reviews its recommendations on screening for different conditions in the light of new research evidence becoming available.

To find out more about the UK NSC's bowel cancer recommendation, please visit:

legacy.screening.nhs.uk/bowelcancer

The UK National Screening Committee (UK NSC) advises ministers and the NHS in the 4 UK countries about all aspects of screening and supports implementation of screening programmes.

Find out more about the UK National Screening Committee at www.gov.uk/government/groups/uk-national-screening-committee-uk-nsc. The UK NSC evidence review process is described at www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-nsc-evidence-review-process and a list of all UK NSC recommendations can be found at legacy.screening.nhs.uk/recommendations

The UK NSC secretariat is hosted by Public Health England (www.gov.uk/phe).