



Dr Rajive Mitra

**Let's be clear.**  
**If for the last 3**  
**weeks you've had**  
**blood in your poo**  
**or it's been looser,**  
**tell your doctor.**

**BE CLEAR  
ON CANCER**



Dr Terry Bowley

...about **bowel cancer**

Bowel cancer is England's third most common cancer, with around 34,000 new cases each year. When it comes to cancer death, it's the second biggest killer, but it needn't be that way.

Bowel cancer affects both men and women. Most people diagnosed with the disease are over 50 and those with a family history of bowel cancer are more at risk. However, the sooner a patient is diagnosed, the better their chances of successful treatment.

## ...about how to **spot it**

**See your doctor straight away if, for the last three weeks, you've had blood in your poo or looser poo. Other bowel cancer symptoms include:**

- A pain or lump in your tummy
- Feeling more tired than usual for some time
- Losing weight for no obvious reason

## ...about how important it is to **see your doctor**

You're not wasting anyone's time by getting it checked out and, if it's not serious, your mind will be put at rest. However, if it is a condition such as bowel cancer, early diagnosis can make all the difference. Over 90% of those diagnosed with early stage bowel cancer are successfully treated. A trip to your doctor's surgery could save your life.

### **Not all symptoms mean it's bowel cancer**

They can be due to other conditions, such as haemorrhoids (piles), which may still need treatment. But don't try and diagnose yourself. Go and see your doctor now to find out for sure.

If you know anyone who has any of these symptoms, insist they see their doctor.

**You can find your doctor's contact details online at [nhs.uk/bowelcancer](https://www.nhs.uk/bowelcancer)**

# ...about how seeing your doctor early could save your life



As a nurse, I came across people with bowel cancer, but never thought it could happen to me. My symptoms included loose poo, occasional bleeding and some lower abdominal pain. My GP referred me to a consultant, who discussed treatment options. The care I received was first-class. I've had the all-clear for five years and can do everything I did before. I volunteer for local charities and enjoy swimming, walking my dogs and travelling.

**Linda O'Donnell, aged 60**



I started noticing that I was going to the toilet a lot more often and my poo was soft and loose. I did feel a little bit embarrassed about discussing my poo with my doctor, but she was very understanding. I finished my treatment in 2002 and I still live life to the full. I've turned my gardening hobby into my job, which keeps me fit. I'm glad I didn't leave it any longer before going to my doctor.

**Lester Marriott, aged 61**

# ...about bowel cancer screening

If you are aged 60 – 69, you'll be sent bowel screening kits every two years. The screening programme is gradually extending to include everyone aged 60 – 74 years, but this hasn't happened everywhere yet. If you are aged 70 or over, you can request a kit by phoning 0800 707 60 60.

The screening kits can help detect bowel cancer early, before you have any symptoms. And as we've said, the earlier the diagnosis, the better your chances of survival.

Experts say that these screening kits can significantly reduce the risk of dying from bowel cancer. They can also detect polyps, which can be easily removed. Polyps aren't cancers, but in some cases they can develop into cancer.

**If you have any symptoms mentioned in this leaflet, don't wait for your screening kit, go and see your doctor as soon as possible. Even if you are waiting for your screening results or your last result was normal, you should still see your doctor if you have any symptoms.**

**To find your doctor's contact details, visit [nhs.uk/bowelcancer](https://www.nhs.uk/bowelcancer)**

# ...about how to **reduce** your chances of getting bowel cancer

## **Eat healthily**

Try to get your 5-a-day. So eat more vegetables and fruit, fish, and wholegrain foods. Eat less fatty foods like cakes and pastries and fewer processed meats like bacon and ham.

## **Cut down on alcohol**

Drinking too much alcohol can lead to a number of health problems and is linked with bowel cancer. By drinking less, you'll reduce your health risks.

## **Look after yourself**

Keep active. Swim, cycle, go dancing... the more you can do, the better. Even walking to your local shops instead of taking the car can make a difference.

## **Stop smoking**

It's never too late to quit. Giving up will lower your risk of getting bowel cancer. There's plenty of help and support available from the NHS. Visit **smokefree.nhs.uk** or call **0800 169 0169**.

## Unclear on anything?

Visit **nhs.uk/bowelcancer**