

Bowel Cancer Awareness Month – Bowel Screening is Important

April is bowel cancer awareness month. More information about this can be found on the Bowel Cancer UK website <http://www.bowelcanceruk.org.uk/>

The information below is adapted from the Bowel Screening Scotland website <http://www.bowelscreening.scot.nhs.uk/>

Bowel cancer is the third commonest cancer in Scotland after lung and breast cancer. It is more common in people over 50 years old, especially in men.

What is the Scottish Bowel Screening Programme?

This programme invites all men and women in Scotland between the ages of 50 and 74 for screening every two years. A Faecal Occult Blood test (FOBT) kit is sent out in the post, completed at home and returned to the national Bowel Screening Centre in Dundee. This kit can pick up hidden blood in the bowel motions. Blood in the motions suggests a higher chance of bowel cancer. All patients are sent results within two weeks.

What if blood is detected in the sample?

If a test comes back showing blood is present in the bowel motions you will be contacted by a health professional. It does not mean you definitely have bowel cancer. You will be invited to have a further assessment and possibly a colonoscopy. This involves a bowel examination using a flexible tube with a camera and is effective at detecting bowel cancer.

If bowel cancer is detected early enough through screening, there is a 90% chance of treating the disease successfully.

What if the screening test is normal?

For most people with a normal test, there is no cancer at that time. The test is not 100% accurate so it is still important to watch for any changes to your bowel motions and report these to your GP. Things to watch for include:

- Repeated bleeding from your bottom or blood in your motions
- A recent and persistent change in bowel habit
- Looser motions or loose motions alternating with constipation
- Severe tummy pains
- Losing weight without trying
- Feeling tired much of the time

These symptoms may be caused by a number of conditions including cancer but, if you have any of them, make an appointment to see your doctor.

It is important to keep repeating the screening tests every two years as problems can arise between screening tests.

If you want more information on bowel screening or a replacement kit please contact the Bowel Screening Centre Helpline on 0800 0121 833.

It is vital that you inform Leith Mount Surgery of your latest address so that you receive your invitations for bowel screening.