

What is it?

Bowel cancer is cancer that affects the colon or rectum. It is also called colorectal cancer. Cancer starts when cells that are not normal grow out of control. Bowel cancer begins when polyps (small clumps of cells) grow in the colon. Over time, polyps can turn into cancer.

There are stages of bowel cancer. People in the early stages may have no symptoms. Others might notice changes in bowel habits, blood in their poo and stomach pain.

Bowel cancer is the third most common cancer in the country. It is more common in people aged over 50. In many cases, bowel cancer can be treated if it is found early.

What will my GP do now?

Your GP may give you advice about treatment options and next steps. They may also give you information about bowel cancer so you can learn more about it. If you need to see a specialist, your GP can help arrange this.

Treatment depends on where the cancer is, what stage it is, how big it is and if it has spread. There are a few treatment options for bowel cancer. Surgery, chemotherapy and radiation therapy are the most common treatments. You may need more than one treatment.

Your GP may also help you manage your mental health and find supports if you are feeling scared or anxious.

Common symptoms

Frequent bowel motions

Rectal bleeding

Rectal discharge

Erectile dysfunction

What will my GP do in the future?

Your GP plays a key role in your care and treatment. If you need treatment, your GP may work with your specialist to provide care. After treatment, your GP may see you to check your health and take blood tests.

If you notice more symptoms, or if your blood test results are not normal, your GP may refer you to a specialist.

What can I do?

Being told you have bowel cancer can be scary, but there are many things you can do now to look after your health and wellbeing:

- Follow your treatment plan and GP's advice
- Tell your GP if you notice any new symptoms
- Read up about bowel cancer and ask your GP if you have any questions

Living a healthy lifestyle is vital for people with bowel cancer. Eat a healthy diet, drink plenty of water, cut back on drinking, quit smoking and get plenty of sleep.

Ask your GP about safe levels of exercise. Living a healthy life can improve your mood and support your treatment plan.

What questions could I ask my doctor?

Who can I speak to for support?

What are the treatment options?

What if my symptoms get worse?

Who do I call for help?

What tests will I need?

How much exercise should I do every day?



What supports are available?

If your GP refers you to an oncologist, you can visit one of these local cancer centres. The staff at the centres will provide support during your treatment.

- **Liverpool Hospital Cancer Services:** Phone **8738 5211**
- **Campbelltown Hospital Cancer Services:** Phone **4634 3000**
- **Bankstown Lidcombe Hospital Cancer Services:** Phone **9722 8606**
- **Bowral and District Hospital Medical Oncology Clinic:** Phone **4861 0200**
- **Southern Highlands Private Hospital Cancer and Day Infusion Centre:** Phone **4862 9470**
- **Macarthur Cancer Therapy Centre:** Phone **4634 4300**

Private specialists are also an option. Ask your GP about a referral.

Where can I learn more?

Australian Department of Health National Bowel Cancer Screening Program:

- How to do the Test Guide for People with Bowel Cancer: health.gov.au
- In Your Language: health.gov.au

Bowel Cancer Australia:

- What is Bowel Cancer? bowelcanceraustralia.org
- National Bowel Cancer Screening Program: bowelcanceraustralia.org

Gastroenterological Society of Australia (GESA):

- Information About Colonoscopy: gesa.org.au

Cancer Australia - Bowel cancer: canceraustralia.gov.au