

DIGESTIVE HEALTH.

Understanding bowel cancer.

Bowel cancer is usually a slow-growing cancer. There are often no symptoms in the early stages of the disease.

Experiencing symptoms does not necessarily mean you have bowel cancer. However, you should see your doctor if you notice:

- bleeding from your bottom or blood in your poo
- a change in your pooing habits. You might be going more or less often, or have diarrhoea or constipation that might come and go
- losing weight but you're not sure why
- feeling very tired all the time but you're not sure why
- a pain or lump in your tummy

The risk of bowel cancer can be reduced by a healthy diet with plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables, limiting red meat, avoiding processed meats, along with not smoking, limiting alcohol and being physically active.



Everyone is at risk of developing bowel cancer, however the risk greatly increases with age, particularly from age 50.



CAUSES OF BOWEL CANCER.

Some factors that increase your risk of bowel cancer include:

- inherited genetic risk and family history
- inflammatory bowel disease such as Crohn's disease
- polyps
- a diet low in fibre and/or a high red meat consumption, especially processed meats
- being overweight or obese
- alcohol consumption
- smoking tobacco

Bowel cancer can begin without noticeable symptoms.
Bowel screening can spot the early signs of bowel cancer.
If found early, successful treatment is more likely.

DIAGNOSIS OF BOWEL CANCER.

A number of tests are used to diagnose bowel cancer:

- First, your doctor will physically examine your abdomen for any swelling. Then, they will perform a digital rectal examination to check for any lumps or swelling in the rectum or anus.
- A blood test to see if there are any signs that you are losing blood via your stools. It can also check your red blood cell count as low red blood cells are common in people with bowel cancer.
- The best test for bowel cancer is a colonoscopy, which examines the length of the large bowel. A camera on the end of the tube allows the gastroenterologist to look for abnormal tissue that, if found, is removed for further examination.



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