

NEWS RELEASE

SCOTLAND'S 50-74 YEAR OLDS CALLED ON TO TAKE THE BOWEL SCREENING TEST

The third most common cancer in Scotland must not be ignored says Professor Robert Steele, Director of the Scottish Bowel Screening Programme.

April is Bowel Cancer Awareness Month and the Programme is reminding every 50 – 74 year old in Scotland they can help to save their life by using a free screening test which will be delivered through their door over the next two years.

95% of all cases of bowel cancer occur in those over 50, and the screening programme offers a real opportunity to identify and treat those at risk.

Professor Steele said:

“Here in Scotland, every year the equivalent of 4 people a day die from bowel cancer.

“This screening programme is very simple, but very effective. It saves lives by detecting problems early and spotting symptoms that people may not know they have.

“Lots of information is provided with the kit when it arrives through the letterbox and the programme also has a great deal of information which people can access whenever it is convenient for them at www.bowelscreening.scot.nhs.uk. This includes a short film which explains more about the test and how to complete this.

“If you receive the test, please take it. It could just save your life.”

Health Secretary Nicola Sturgeon said:

“Around 3,400 new cases of bowel cancer are diagnosed each year in Scotland and thanks to the Scottish Bowel Screening Programme, we expect at least 150 lives will be saved each year.

“Bowel cancer is one of our biggest cancer killers but if it's caught early it can be very successfully treated. If you're one of the 700,000 Scots who will receive a screening kit through the post, I would urge you to use it - it could save your life.”

The Bowel Screening Test was introduced to the Borders in November last year.

Emma Howie, Clinical Nurse Specialist in Gastroenterology for NHS Borders, said

“We know that many people are too embarrassed to talk to their doctor about the type of symptoms which are associated with bowel disease, so we hope that this simple test, which can be done at home, will encourage people to take part in the screening. If bowel cancer is caught at an early stage, it is possible for it to be treated and cured.”

“Since NHS Borders joined the screening programme last November, we have had 78 referrals to our gastroenterology service of people who tested positive through the Bowel Screening Test. The next stage is a colonoscopy test which is an examination of the colon (large bowel. This is the best way to exclude cancer or to detect an early cancer.”

“For further information I would urge people to go onto www.bowelscreening.scot.nhs.uk, or free phone number 0800 0121 833. Information is also available at your health centre.”

If you would like to find out more about the colonoscopy test and can access the internet look at www.patient.co.uk and search for ‘colonoscopy.’

Notes to editors

1. Scotland has a higher incidence rate of bowel cancer than most other countries in the Western world:
 - it is the third most commonly diagnosed cancer in both men and women;
 - the second most common cause of cancer death for men;
 - the third most common cause of cancer death for women;
 - around 1,600 people die of the disease in Scotland each year;
 - approximately 3,400 new cases are diagnosed each year;
 - 95% of cases occur in people aged over 50 years; and the five year survival rate is approximately 50% for both men and women.
2. The pilot bowel (or colorectal) screening programme began in April 2000 in Tayside, Grampian and Fife NHS Boards. All men and women registered with a GP Practice aged 50-69 years were invited to participate. The pilot has been running continuously since then with eligible men and women screened every 2 years. Following successful evaluation of the pilot, a phased rollout of a national screening programme for all men and women aged 50 -74 began in June 2007 with all NHS Boards on the Programme by December 2009. Men and women eligible for the programme are posted a simple test which they complete at home and return to the central Scottish Bowel Screening Centre in Dundee. Those completing the test are informed of their results by the Centre. If the Centre identifies something which requires further investigation, the person will be referred to their local hospital. More information can be found at www.bowelscreening.scot.nhs.uk
3. Those eligible for the programme can call the Helpline on 0800 0121 833, between 8am and 6pm Monday to Friday for further information or email via www.bowelscreening.scot.nhs.uk .
4. A short film which explains more about the test and how to complete this can be viewed on-line at: <http://www.bowelscreening.scot.nhs.uk/index.php/bsdvd>. This is available in different languages and carries subtitles and BSL.

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