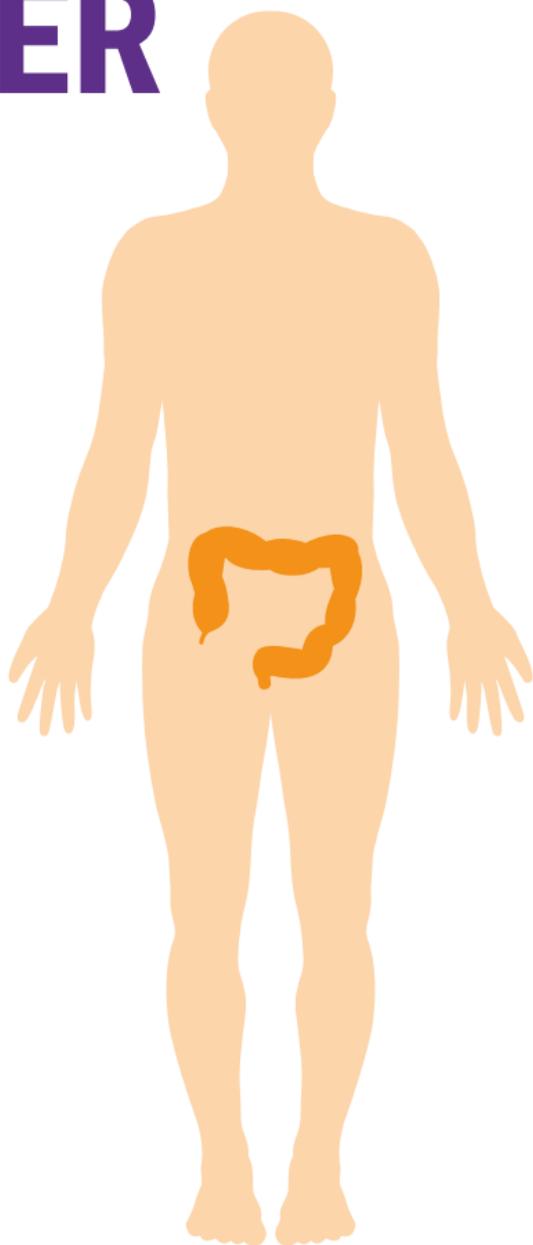




World
Cancer
Research
Fund

PROTECT YOURSELF AGAINST BOWEL CANCER

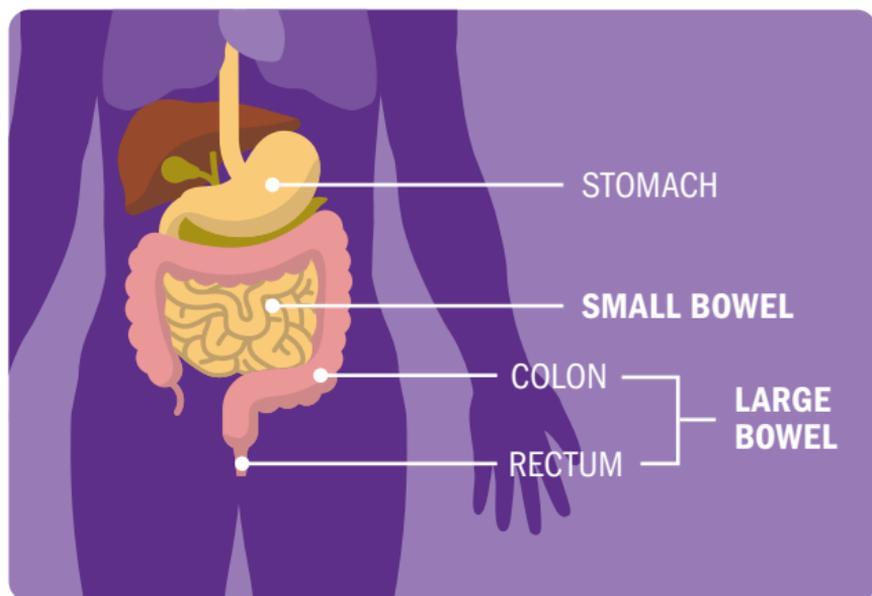


Bowel cancer – also known as colorectal cancer – is the fourth most common type of cancer in the UK with over 40,000 new cases diagnosed every year. But the evidence suggests around half of cases could be prevented if we all lived healthy lifestyles. This includes eating a healthy diet, being physically active and maintaining a healthy weight.

What is the bowel?

The bowel is part of our digestive system. It is made up of two parts: the small and large bowel. Nearly all bowel cancers are in the large bowel, which includes the colon and the rectum.

Most of the nutrients from the food we eat are absorbed in the small bowel. Food then passes into the colon where water and any remaining nutrients are absorbed, leaving behind solid waste products. These waste products move through the colon and the rectum before leaving the body.



Bowel cancer starts when cells in the bowel lining are damaged and then grow uncontrollably, forming a tumour. Many different factors contribute to the development of bowel cancer.

Who is most likely to develop bowel cancer?

Bowel cancer is common in both men and women. Although more than 8 out of 10 cases are diagnosed in people aged 60 and over, our lifestyles today can affect our chance of developing the disease in the future.

As with all cancers, the likelihood of developing bowel cancer is different for each person and it isn't caused by one thing. There are lots of different factors that can increase or decrease our chances of developing the disease, many of which are linked to our lifestyle. This means that you can make changes to protect yourself.

Risk factors

Risk factors are things associated with an increased likelihood of developing bowel cancer. Some risk factors are beyond our control, such as:

- ▶ **Having a family history of bowel cancer**
- ▶ **Having a personal history of polyps or certain types of bowel disease, such as ulcerative colitis or Crohn's disease**

But there is also strong scientific evidence linking increased likelihood of bowel cancer with lifestyle factors that we can do something about, such as:

- ▶ **Being overweight or obese**
- ▶ **Not eating enough fibre, eg. in wholegrain foods, vegetables and fruit**
- ▶ **Eating too much red meat, eg. beef, lamb and pork**
- ▶ **Eating processed meat, eg. bacon, ham and salami**
- ▶ **Not doing enough physical activity**
- ▶ **Drinking alcohol**
- ▶ **Smoking tobacco**

If any of these risk factors apply to you, it doesn't mean that you will develop bowel cancer – it just means that you're more likely to than those who do not have these risk factors. The important thing to remember is that even small lifestyle changes can help to make bowel cancer less likely in your future.

How to protect yourself

By following this advice, you can help to protect yourself against bowel cancer.



Be a healthy weight

Eating a healthy balanced diet, including lots of fruit, vegetables and wholegrains, and keeping physically active – which includes walking – can help you to maintain your weight.

Check out our tips for healthy eating and keeping active here:

wcrf-uk.org/weight



Boost your fibre

Wholegrain varieties of rice, bread, pasta and unsweetened breakfast cereals; pulses, such as beans, peas and lentils; vegetables and fruit are all good sources of fibre. Fibre is important for keeping your digestive system healthy and can also help you keep a healthy weight by making you feel fuller on fewer calories.

There is strong scientific evidence that eating a diet rich in these foods can help protect you against bowel cancer.

Aim to eat at least five portions of vegetables and fruit a day, and swap to wholegrain foods, such as brown rice and pasta, and wholegrain bread.





Limit red meat & avoid processed meat

Red meat, such as beef, pork, lamb and goat, can form part of a healthy, balanced diet, but we don't need to eat it every day. There is strong scientific evidence that eating too much red meat can increase your risk of bowel cancer. That's why **we recommend eating no more than three portions of red meat a week – that's about 350–500g (cooked weight) a week.**

How much can I have a week?



Here's an example of how you could have three meals a week containing red meat and still stick to less than 350g (cooked weight):

- ▶ **A serving of spaghetti Bolognese made with minced beef = 140g cooked** (about 210g raw)
- ▶ **Small pork or lamb chop = 75g cooked** (about 110g raw)
- ▶ **Roast beef, pork or lamb** (three thin slices) = **90g cooked** (about 130g raw)

It's best to opt for lean cuts and trim visible fat.

The research linking processed meat (like bacon, ham and salami) with bowel cancer is even stronger. Also, it is lower in healthy nutrients than fresh red meat, so **we recommend avoiding processed meats as much as possible.**

TOP TIP: Swap red or processed meat for skinless poultry, such as chicken and turkey; fish (fresh, frozen or canned in spring water – for general health, it may be best to limit smoked fish as it can be high in salt); or vegetarian alternatives such as tofu, Quorn and beans.





Move more

Evidence shows that aerobic physical activity – such as swimming, jogging or cycling and particularly walking – can help us to maintain a healthy weight. Being physically active also helps food to move through your digestive system more quickly.



Aim to do at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity a week – that's any activity that raises your heart rate and makes you breathe a bit deeper. Also try to **spend less time sitting down**.

TOP TIP: Being physically active doesn't mean you have to go to the gym – brisk walking, gardening, vacuuming, swimming and dancing count too.



Think about what you drink

Drinking any amount of alcohol will increase your risk of cancer so, **for cancer prevention, it is best not to drink alcohol**. If you choose to, limit alcoholic drinks and follow national guidelines.

The UK recommendation is to drink no more than 14 units a week, spread over at least three days.



Half a pint of regular strength lager or cider or a single measure (25ml) of spirits contains 1 unit.



A small glass (125ml) of wine contains 1.5 units.

Choosing not to smoke (or giving up smoking) is an important way to protect yourself against cancer, including bowel cancer.

Symptoms to look out for (based on NHS advice)

If you have had blood in your poo or looser poo for three weeks or more, speak to your doctor about it as soon as possible.

There's a good chance it's nothing to worry about, but it could be the early signs of bowel cancer so it is important to get it checked out. Telling your doctor might save your life or, at the very least, it will stop you from worrying.

Other symptoms can include: pain or a lump in your tummy, feeling unusually tired, and unexplained weight loss.

What about screening?

The majority of bowel cancer cases can be successfully treated if they are found early – that's why the UK has a bowel cancer screening programme. Call your local bowel screening helpline for more information:



England: **0800 707 6060**

Northern Ireland: **0800 015 2514**

Scotland: **0800 012 1833**

Wales: **0800 294 3370**

All men and women aged between 60 (50 in Scotland) and 74 should receive a free home testing kit every two years. In England and Scotland, people over 74 can request a kit. This quick and simple test is completely free and could save your life.

A one-off bowel scope screening is also offered in England to 55-year olds.

If you are at a higher risk of bowel cancer (for example, if you have a strong family history of the disease), your doctor may recommend bowel cancer screening at an earlier age. Speak to your doctor for more advice if you are concerned about this.



Find out more

For more information on **protecting yourself against cancer**, as well as **practical advice on choosing a balanced diet, being physically active and maintaining a healthy weight**, visit our website: **wcrf-uk.org** or call us on **020 7343 4205**.

For information about **symptoms, screening** and for **answers to frequently asked questions**, please visit: **nhs.uk/bowelcancer** or speak to your doctor.

If you want more information on the **detection and treatment of bowel cancer (or other cancers)**, we recommend contacting **Macmillan Cancer Support**. Visit their website: **macmillan.org.uk** or call **0808 808 0000**.

Cancer Prevention Recommendations



Be a healthy weight



Be physically active



Eat a diet rich in wholegrains, vegetables, fruit and beans



Limit consumption of 'fast foods' and other processed foods high in fat, starches or sugars



Limit consumption of red and processed meat



Limit consumption of sugar-sweetened drinks



Limit alcohol consumption



Do not use supplements for cancer prevention



For mothers: breastfeed your baby, if you can



After a cancer diagnosis: follow our Recommendations, if you can

Not smoking and avoiding other exposure to tobacco and excess sun are also important in reducing cancer risk.

Following these Recommendations is likely to reduce intakes of salt, saturated and trans fats, which together will help prevent other non-communicable diseases.

To read our full Recommendations visit:
wcrf-uk.org/10ways



About World Cancer Research Fund

World Cancer Research Fund is the leading UK charity dedicated to the prevention of cancer. Our mission is to champion the latest and most authoritative scientific research from around the world on cancer prevention and survival through diet, weight and physical activity so that we can help people make informed lifestyle choices to protect themselves against cancer.

Currently, one in two people born in the UK after 1960 will develop cancer at some point in their lives, but around 40 per cent of cancer cases could be prevented. By following our Cancer Prevention Recommendations, choosing not to smoke (or giving up smoking) and being safe in the sun, you will have the best chance of living a life free from the disease.

The cornerstone of our research programme is our Continuous Update Project (CUP). It's the world's largest source of scientific research on cancer prevention and survival through diet, weight and physical activity. A panel of world-renowned independent experts review the scientific research to develop Cancer Prevention Recommendations based on the best evidence. Find out more: wcrf-uk.org/our-research

For the references used or to request the information in large print, please contact us at resources@wcrf.org. Any comments or suggestions are gratefully received.

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