

Bowel Cancer Awareness, so start the conversation....

We know that 9 out of 10 cases of bowel cancer can be treated successfully if diagnosed early and that's why we're Lifting the Lid on the importance of early diagnosis for Bowel Cancer Awareness Month.

We know that too few people talk about bowel cancer and that it's still considered a taboo by many. Sometimes embarrassment can even stop people from getting the help they need.

That's why our Lift the Lid campaign asks you all to have a conversation about bowel cancer to help spread awareness.

If you have been experiencing any of the higher-risk symptoms of bowel cancer for 3 weeks or more your GP will want to see you.

- Bleeding from the bottom



- A change in your bowel habit lasting more than 3 weeks
- Abdominal pain especially if severe
- A lump in your tummy
- Weight loss and tiredness

Some people struggle with working up the courage or finding the time to make this important appointment, and this delay only increases the worry and fear.

Your GP will listen carefully to your concerns. They will encourage you to talk about the symptoms you have been having, including those problems affecting your bottom and your bowel habits. Whatever you have to say, they will encourage and support you to share your concerns with them, so that they can help you.



The more information you can give to your doctor about your bowel habits and what has changed recently, the easier it will be for them to make an accurate diagnosis – so don't be shy, and don't put it off.

Before you go to the doctor, it might be useful to keep a diary recording the symptoms you have been experiencing, and for how long. It may also be worth printing this page, considering your answers to the questions below and take it with you to your appointment.

If you go to the GP with a bowel related problem, here is a list of routine questions which your doctor should ask as part of your consultation:

How recently did you start to notice the symptoms?

Have you noticed any bleeding from your bottom? If you have, what did it look like - bright red, dark red - and how much blood was there?

Have you noticed looser, more diarrhoea-like poo, and going to the toilet more? Or, are you trying to go and feel that you are constipated, or unable to completely empty your bowel?

Is there any family history of bowel cancer, or any other cancer?

Have you experienced any unusual abdominal (tummy) pain or lumps?
Have you unexpectedly lost weight or become more tired recently?



Your doctor should also ask you additional questions on:
Your lifestyle and diet (to identify any other possible risk factors)
Your own past medical history
Any medicines you might be taking (including pain killers, anti-inflammatory medicines, indigestion remedies, antibiotics and laxatives).

Your GP will need to know how your symptoms are affecting your quality of life. This is a particular problem if the work you do makes it very difficult to cope, or if you are having to take time off because of embarrassing problems with changing bowel habit, or if your ability to work is being affected by pain; feeling tired or dizzy or getting short of breath; not being able to eat properly or needing to go to the toilet more frequently.

For more information visit the Beating Bowel Cancer website at www.beatingbowelcancer.org



Call the Beating Bowel Cancer Helpline on 020 8973 0011

Or email nurse@beatingbowelcancer.org