



National Institute for Public Health  
and the Environment  
*Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport*

# *Bowel cancer* screening programme

Invitation



## What does the screening programme involve?

The bowel cancer screening programme involves tests for traces of blood in your stool (poo). Blood in your stool could be linked to polyps and bowel cancer. You do a stool test at home, which you return by post. You are informed within ten working days whether further testing is needed.

## Why there is a need for a screening programme?

Every year, about 13,700 people are told that they have bowel cancer.\* The screening programme is intended to detect bowel cancer at the earliest possible moment. This increases the chance of a successful treatment. Often, the treatment is also less onerous.

With the population screening, we can also find polyps in the large intestine. These polyps are not cancer yet but can become cancerous. By removing polyps, bowel cancer can be prevented.

Since we repeat the population screening every two years, it is more likely that we will detect polyps early. As a result, fewer people end up with bowel cancer. Over time, the screening programme will reduce the number of people who die from bowel cancer from 3.7 in 100 to 2.4 in 100.

### **Consult your GP if you have intestinal complaints.**

The test results from the screening are not 100% certain. As a result, there is always a chance that bowel cancer will be missed.

Do you see blood in your stool? Or have you been suffering from constipation or diarrhoea for a long time without a clear cause? Then you should make an appointment with your GP.

*\*Source: Netherlands Comprehensive Cancer Organisation (IKNL)*

## For everyone aged 55 to 75 years

Polyps and bowel cancer are more common in men and women older than 55 years. That is why you can participate in the screening programme from the age of 55 onwards. For men and women over the age of 75, the chance is small that we detect bowel cancer that they die from. Participation in the screening programme could lead to unnecessary treatment of cancer for them.

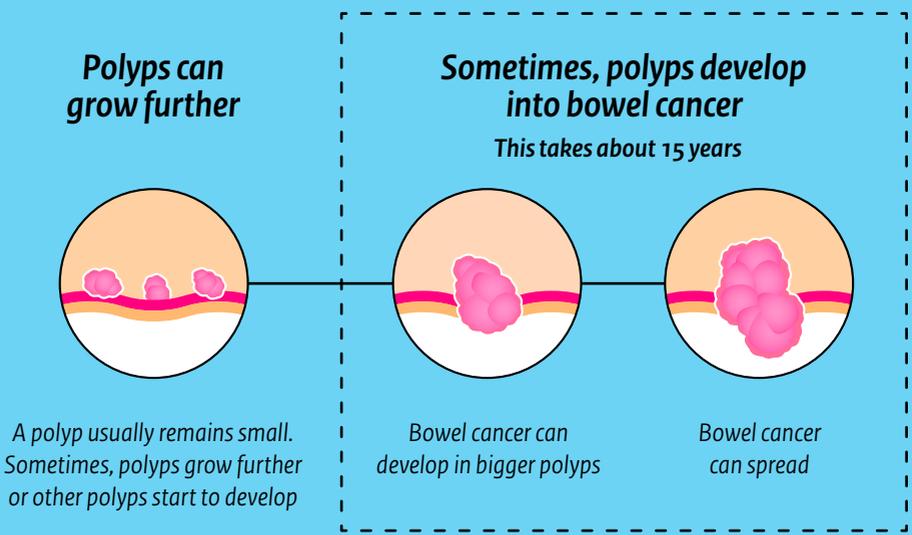
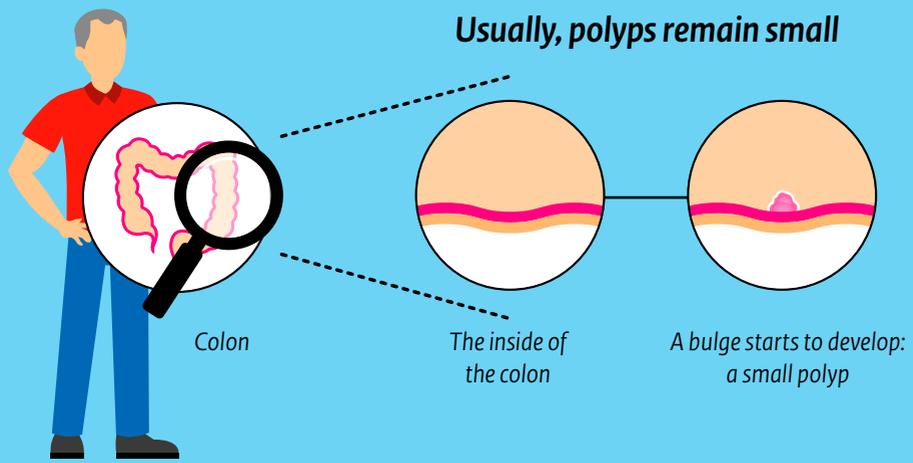
## What is this leaflet for?

The bowel cancer screening programme has advantages and disadvantages. It is up to you whether or not you participate. The information in the leaflet will help you decide.



# What causes bowel cancer?

Bowel cancer starts as a polyp in the colon. A polyp is a bulge on the inside of the colon. Most polyps are harmless, but bowel cancer develops in some polyps. Most people do not notice anything from polyps.



## It is up to you whether or not you participate

Just as any other medical test, the screening has advantages and disadvantages.

### **The screening does not provide 100% certainty**

There is always a chance that bowel cancer will be missed. It is also possible that you will develop intestinal complaints that are linked to bowel cancer in the period between the two examinations. That is why you should always go to the GP if you have complaints.

### **Participating in the screening could cause you a certain amount of anxiety.**

Is a follow-up examination necessary? That does not necessarily mean that you have bowel cancer. There may also be other reasons for blood in your stool.

### **Innocent polyps are also removed**

If a doctor discovers polyps during the follow-up examination, they will be removed. Most polyps are innocent. This could mean that polyps will be removed even if they would not have affected you.

### **There is a chance of complications during the follow-up examination.**

Every follow-up examination is done very carefully. Nevertheless, complications can occur, with a very small chance of death. More information on this can be found at [www.bevolkingsonderzoekdarmkanker.nl](http://www.bevolkingsonderzoekdarmkanker.nl) under 'Participate or not?'

### **Would you prefer not to participate in the screening programme?**

You can unsubscribe by logging into Mijn Bevolkingsonderzoek [My Screening Programme] with your DigiD (see page 9). You can also call or send an e-mail to the screening organisation in your region. You can find the telephone number and e-mail address at the top of the letter with this leaflet.

For more information about advantages and disadvantages of the screening programme go to [www.bevolkingsonderzoekdarmkanker.nl](http://www.bevolkingsonderzoekdarmkanker.nl)



# The examination: from test to result

Polyps and bowel cancer can cause small bleedings. We use a test to examine whether there is blood in your stool.

## 1 The stool test

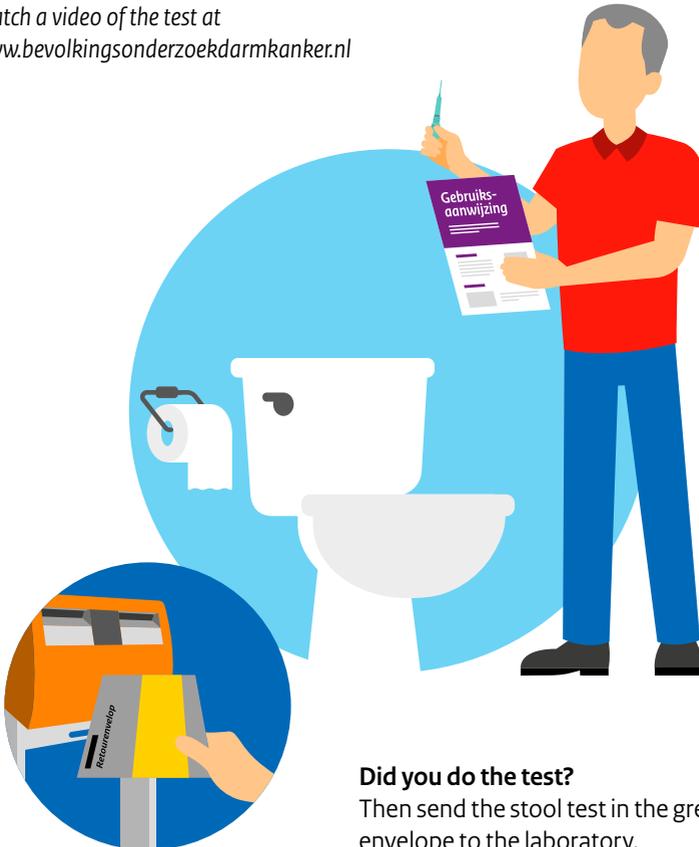
Perform the test. Carefully follow the steps in the instructions.

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### **Do you want to see what happens during the test?**

Watch a video of the test at

[www.bevolkingsonderzoekdarmkanker.nl](http://www.bevolkingsonderzoekdarmkanker.nl)



### **Did you do the test?**

Then send the stool test in the grey envelope to the laboratory.

## 2 Research in the laboratory

Blood in the stool is often invisible to the naked eye. That is why the stool is examined in the laboratory.



## 3 The test results

You will receive a letter containing the results within ten working days. This letter with the results will tell you if a follow-up examination is necessary.



# What are the possible results?

You can receive one of the following two results:

## 1 No follow-up examination is needed

We did not find blood in your stool. If you have not reached the age of 75 in two years, you will receive another invitation for the screening programme.



**95** out of **100** people  
have no blood in  
their stool

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## 2 A follow-up examination is necessary

We found blood in your stool. Blood in your stool could be linked to polyps or bowel cancer. There may also be other causes. That is why a follow-up examination is needed. At the hospital, a specialist will determine the cause.



**5** out of **100** people  
have blood in their  
stool

### What is the follow-up examination?

The letter with the results contains an appointment for an intake interview at the hospital. During that interview you will receive an explanation about a surveillance examination in your colon. More information about the surveillance examination can be found at [www.bevolkingsonderzoekdarmkanker.nl](http://www.bevolkingsonderzoekdarmkanker.nl)

## Your data

### **We have obtained your name, address and date of birth from the local authority**

When you send the reply envelope with the test, you give permission to use your details and the results of the test for the screening programme and any follow-up examination at the hospital.

### **Data exchange with your GP**

Your GP will receive the results automatically. Do you want us to inform your GP if a follow-up examination is needed? We can only do that if you pass on your GP's details to the screening organisation in your region. Do this before you send the test. You can call or send an e-mail to the screening organisation. You can find the telephone number and e-mail address at the top of the letter with this leaflet. You can also pass on your GP's information via Mijn Bevolkingsonderzoek [My Population Screening] (see blue bar below).

### **What happens with the stool from the test?**

Some stool material is left over after the testing. The stool material that remains after testing is destroyed. For the use of human material, see the website [www.bevolkingsonderzoekdarmkanker.nl](http://www.bevolkingsonderzoekdarmkanker.nl)

### **Your privacy is protected**

We use the results from the test to continue to improve the screening. For this goal, we will exchange data with research and care facilities. We adhere to the privacy legislation and have drawn up a privacy policy for this. See the website of the screening organisation in your region.

### **You can object**

If you not want us to exchange data, you can also object through your screening organisation. You can find the contact details in the letter with this leaflet.

#### **Mijn Bevolkingsonderzoek**

Through Mijn Bevolkingsonderzoek [My screening programme], you can view and change your personal details online.

You log in with your DigiD at: [portaal.landelijkkescreening.nl](http://portaal.landelijkkescreening.nl)



## More information

More information about the screening programme can be found at [www.bevolkingsonderzoekdarmkanker.nl](http://www.bevolkingsonderzoekdarmkanker.nl)

### More information about bowel cancer

[www.kanker.nl/darmkanker](http://www.kanker.nl/darmkanker)

[www.mlds.nl/darmkanker](http://www.mlds.nl/darmkanker)

[www.thuisarts.nl/darmkanker](http://www.thuisarts.nl/darmkanker)

### Do you have any questions, tips or complaints?

The screening organisations coordinate the screening on behalf of the government. If you have any questions, tips or complaints about the screening, please contact the screening organisation in your region. You will find the contact details in the invitation letter. The screening organisations have a complaints procedure.



#### 1. Screening Programme 'Noord'

[www.bevolkingsonderzoeknoord.nl](http://www.bevolkingsonderzoeknoord.nl)

#### 2. Screening Programme 'Oost'

[www.bevolkingsonderzoekoost.nl](http://www.bevolkingsonderzoekoost.nl)

#### 3. Screening Programme 'Zuid'

[www.bevolkingsonderzoekzuid.nl](http://www.bevolkingsonderzoekzuid.nl)

#### 4. Screening Programme 'Zuid-West'

[www.bevolkingsonderzoekzuid-west.nl](http://www.bevolkingsonderzoekzuid-west.nl)

#### 5. Screening Programme 'Midden-West'

[www.bevolkingsonderzoekzuid-west.nl](http://www.bevolkingsonderzoekzuid-west.nl)

## ***bevolkings*onderzoek**

A screening programme is a free medical examination for early detection of a disease. The government provides three screening programmes for cancer. These are screenings for cervical cancer, breast cancer and bowel cancer. These diseases can be detected at an early stage, even before symptoms are shown.

*Great care and attention was devoted to the contents of this leaflet. You cannot derive any rights from it.*

## Information in other languages

[www.bevolkingsonderzoekdarmkanker.nl/vertalingen](http://www.bevolkingsonderzoekdarmkanker.nl/vertalingen)

This leaflet is the result of joint cooperation with:



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