

National Bowel Cancer Screening Program

Guide for nurses working in general practice

**NATIONAL
BOWELCANCER**
SCREENING PROGRAM

What is bowel cancer?

Bowel cancer is the uncontrolled growth of abnormal cells in the wall of the large bowel, often starting as polyps. Bowel cancer is one of Australia's most common cancers, and is the second biggest cancer killer in Australia after lung cancer.

What is bowel cancer screening and why is it important?

Screening using an immunochemical Faecal Occult Blood Test (iFOBT) helps find bowel cancer in its earlier stages when there are often no symptoms, thereby reducing deaths from this disease. It can also prevent bowel cancer as polyps are removed before they turn into cancer.

Who should screen?

50 – 74 year olds with no personal bowel cancer or bowel disease history, no family history, and no symptoms should complete a iFOBT every two years. Those with family history and/or symptoms should see a GP.

How can patients screen for bowel cancer?

The National Bowel Cancer Screening Program (NBCSP) sends out free iFOBTs to eligible Australians aged 50-74 using Medicare and Department of Veterans' Affairs information. The iFOBT looks for hidden blood in faeces which could be an early sign of bowel cancer.

Who receives a free iFOBT?

In 2017: 50, 54, 55, 58, 60, 64, 68, 70, 72, 74 year olds

In 2018: 50, 54, 58, 60, 62, 64, 66, 68, 70, 72, 74 year olds

2019 and onwards: 50, 52, 54, 56, 58, 60, 62, 64, 66, 68, 70, 72, 74

Visit www.cancerscreening.gov.au/eligibility to check when your patient will receive an invitation

Why should nurses working in general practice be involved?

Almost two out of three people who are sent a free iFOBT in the mail do not complete it. If health professionals recommend bowel screening to their patients, they are more likely to do it.

Are there symptoms?

Not all bowel cancers show symptoms, and most bowel symptoms do not indicate bowel cancer. However, patients should see their GP if they have:

- blood in the toilet after a bowel motion;
- a recent and persistent change in bowel habit;
- unexplained tiredness or weight loss; or
- abdominal pain.

For more information

For information on screening and the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program

www.cancerscreening.gov.au/bowel

NBCSP Information Line

1800 118 868

For information on bowel cancer and links to state and territory Cancer Councils

www.cancer.org.au

National Bowel Cancer Screening Program online module

www.apna.asn.au/onlinelearning



Australian Government



This initiative was funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and delivered by the Australian Primary Health Care Nurses Association (APNA), with the support of Cancer Council WA.

Conversation Guide

For nurses working in general practice

Patient: The use of the term patient is used throughout this guide to describe the person accessing care

