



Staying well

To help reduce your risk of bowel cancer:

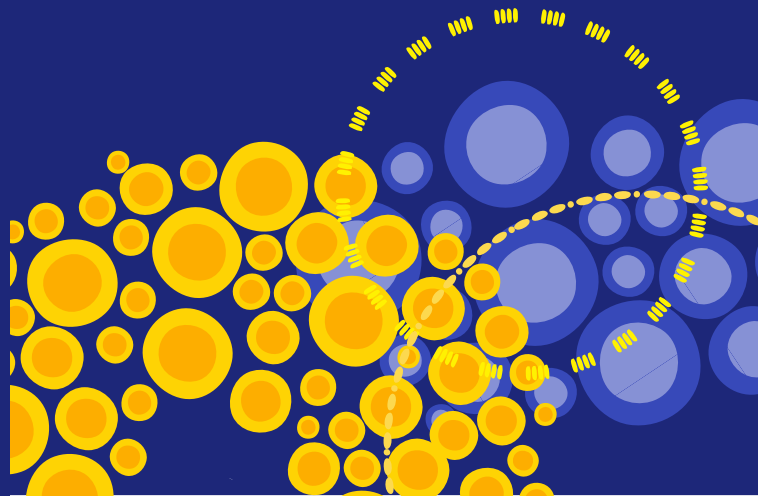
- eat a healthy diet, including plenty of vegetables and fruit and only small amounts of red meat, particularly processed meats
- keep a healthy body weight
- exercise regularly
- limit alcohol
- don't smoke
- screen every two years from ages 50 to 74

Reduce your risk of bowel cancer.

For cancer
information and
support call the
Cancer Council on
13 11 20 or visit
cancervic.org.au

Artwork (detail):
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[www.cancervic.org.au/
dixon-patten](http://www.cancervic.org.au/dixon-patten)

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What is bowel cancer?

Bowel cancer (also known as colorectal cancer) is the second biggest cancer killer in Australia.

Bowel cancer starts as a growth on the bowel wall called a polyp. Polyps are usually harmless but may turn into cancer over time. If removed, the risk of bowel cancer goes down.

Even if you feel well, screening for bowel cancer is important because it can develop without symptoms. If bowel cancer is found early, most can be successfully treated.

Who is at risk of bowel cancer?

Bowel cancer can happen at any age, but the risk is greater for men and women over the age of 50. Other factors can also increase your risk, including:

- **lifestyle factors:** being overweight; doing little physical activity; a diet low in fibre or high in fat or red meat, especially processed meats; drinking alcohol or smoking
- **some bowel diseases:** particularly ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease
- **a strong family history** of bowel cancer, including Lynch syndrome.

If you're concerned about your risk, see your doctor.

What are the symptoms?

Bowel cancer often develops without symptoms, but it is important to see your doctor if you notice any of the following:

- any sign of blood in or after a poo
- change in your poo that won't go away e.g. loose or more frequent, increased constipation
- the feeling that your bowel is not empty after going to the toilet
- stomach pain or discomfort
- unexplained weight loss, tiredness, weakness or breathlessness.

Screen for bowel cancer for peace of mind

If you're aged 50–74, Cancer Council recommends doing a simple at-home screening test, called a faecal occult blood test, every two years.

This test looks for traces of blood in the poo which are invisible to the eye and could be a sign of bowel cancer.

The National Bowel Cancer Screening Program sends a free home screening test to men and women aged 50–74 every two years.

Call the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program on 1800 118 868 to find out when your free test will arrive.

If you are not eligible through the national program you can speak with your doctor about how to get a home screening test.