


# Bowel cancer screening patient information guide

This bowel cancer screening guide contains important information about your screening test, including preparation instructions, how the test works, and what to expect from your results at Moonee Valley Specialist Centre in Essendon.

Moonee Valley
SPECIALIST CENTRE
Gastroenterological and Related Care



## What is a bowel cancer screening?

Bowel cancer screening helps detect early signs of bowel cancer before symptoms develop. One of the most common screening tests is the Faecal Occult Blood Test (FOBT), also known as a FIT home kit. This is a simple, non-invasive test that can be completed at home and returned to a pathology laboratory for analysis.

The test looks for small amounts of hidden blood in the stool. Blood may be present due to bowel cancer, polyps, adenomas, haemorrhoids, or other bowel conditions.

If blood is detected, your healthcare provider may recommend further investigations, such as a colonoscopy, to determine the cause. If no blood is detected, your risk of bowel cancer is considered low, though regular screening every two years is still recommended.

## Quick facts

| | FOBT home screening test | Colonoscopy (if required after screening) |
|---|---|---|
| **Duration** | Home sample collection usually takes a few minutes | Approximately 30–60 minutes |
| **Anaesthesia** | Not required | Sedation is usually required |
| **Fasting** | Not required for FOBT/FIT home testing | Clear fluids and bowel preparation required before the procedure |
| **Recovery** | No recovery time needed | Recovery monitoring required after sedation |
| **Results** | Results are reviewed after laboratory analysis | Preliminary findings may be discussed on the day |

## Important things to remember

- Follow the instructions provided with your screening kit carefully.
- Avoid completing the test during your menstrual period or while experiencing bleeding haemorrhoids if possible.
- Ensure stool samples do not come into contact with toilet water or cleaning products.
- Label and return your sample promptly after collection.
- Contact our clinic if you have questions about your results or next steps.

# Preparation steps

### Before collecting your sample

Read all instructions included with your FOBT or FIT kit before starting the test. Ensure you have everything needed for sample collection and return packaging.

### During sample collection

Use toilet paper, a clean container, or the collection device supplied with your kit to catch the stool sample before it comes into contact with toilet water.

Use the collection stick to gather a small sample as instructed and place it into the collection tube.

### After sample collection

Write the collection date on the sample tube if required, and return the test to the pathology laboratory as soon as possible using the provided packaging.

### If a colonoscopy is recommended

If blood is detected during screening, your healthcare provider may recommend a colonoscopy for further assessment.

Preparation for a colonoscopy usually involves:

- Following a low-fibre diet for 1–3 days before the procedure
- Avoiding seeds, nuts, whole grains, and raw vegetables
- Drinking a bowel preparation solution as instructed
- Following clear fluid fasting instructions before the procedure

Your specialist will provide detailed colonoscopy preparation instructions if required.

# What to expect

If blood is detected during bowel cancer screening, your healthcare provider may recommend a colonoscopy to investigate the cause further.

A colonoscopy is performed using a flexible camera called a colonoscope, which allows your specialist to examine the lining of the large bowel for polyps, bleeding, inflammation, or signs of bowel cancer.

Before your procedure, you will receive detailed bowel preparation instructions to help clear the bowel and improve visibility during the examination.

### During the colonoscopy

- The procedure is usually performed under sedation to help keep you comfortable throughout the examination.
- A flexible camera is carefully passed through the rectum and large bowel while your specialist examines the bowel lining. If polyps are found, they may be removed during the procedure and sent for further testing.
- Most colonoscopy appointments are completed within 30–60 minutes, including preparation and recovery time.

### After the colonoscopy

Following the procedure, you will rest in recovery while the sedation wears off. Mild bloating or cramping may occur temporarily and usually settles quickly.

Your specialist may discuss preliminary findings on the day, though biopsy or pathology results can take several days to return.

Since sedation is used, you will need someone to drive you home after the procedure, and you should avoid driving, operating machinery, or making important decisions for the rest of the day.

## Risks and safety of bowel cancer screening

- FOBT and FIT bowel cancer screening tests are safe, non-invasive, and low risk for most patients. The screening process does not involve sedation, radiation, or invasive procedures.

- A positive screening result does not always mean bowel cancer is present, and a negative result does not completely exclude bowel disease or future cancer risk.

- If a colonoscopy is recommended following screening, your specialist will explain the procedure, preparation requirements, and any associated risks before treatment. While colonoscopy is generally safe, potential risks may include bleeding, bowel perforation, reactions to sedation, infection, or temporary bloating and discomfort after the procedure.

- Following bowel preparation and fasting instructions carefully helps support accurate assessment and reduce the likelihood of repeat procedures.

Bowel cancer screening kits are available through the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program or may be discussed with your GP or specialist clinic if further assessment is recommended.



## Need to reschedule or have questions?

**Phone:** 1300 938 148

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**Address:** 1003 Mt Alexander Road, Essendon VIC 3040

**Scan to manage your booking**

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