

Bowel Screening

A key aim of the Scottish Government, which we share, is to improve survival rates from cancer. One of the most significant factors in this is early detection. Many will have seen adverts supporting early detection of lung and breast cancer fronted by Sir Alex Ferguson and Elaine C Smith. If cancer can be detected at as early a stage as possible then treatment is generally more successful and tolerable. Ideally for some cancers it is best to identify these before they cause any symptoms - hence breast and cervical screening have been undertaken for many years.

A more recent cancer screening programme has been for bowel cancer.

Everyone between the age of 50 and 74 is sent a bowel screening kit every two years. This basically checks for blood within a bowel motion with further investigation if positive. Uptake of this screening programme nationally however has to date been a bit disappointing. There may be many reasons for this including perception that the screening test is a bit messy (it shouldn't be), a fear of the tests and treatment if positive and a general "head in the sand" factor (more common in men than women!). This is unfortunate as bowel cancer, one of the most common types of cancer, is readily curable for most if found at an early stage. If you have lost your kit or for any other questions please phone 0800 0121 833.

Please therefore do not ignore the brown envelope from Dundee when it comes in. If you have loved ones, friends, acquaintances or folk you look out for in this age group please also prompt/cajole, nag them to return their kit. Blokes, this is much easier than what ladies put up with from smears and mammograms! Don't throw these out or leave them in the drawer to be done sometime. Lives will be saved if more of these kits are returned ... yours might just be one of them.

For further information on bowel cancer and screening please visit www.bowelscreening.scot.nhs.uk