



29 January 2025

Deputy Mark Ward
mark.ward@oireachtas.ie

Our Ref: GM/Communications

PQ46273.25: To ask the Minister for Health if the HSE supplies free bowel cancer test kits to the public; the criteria to receive one; if there are plans to introduce them for persons in their 50s; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Ward,

I refer to the above Parliamentary Question.

About BowelScreen

BowelScreen offers free bowel screening to people aged 59 to 69 every two years. Once the person gives their consent to participate, they are sent a faecal immunochemical test (or 'FIT kit') which is a test done at home and returned by post at their convenience.

Bowel screening is a preventative health measure. The primary objective of BowelScreen is to reduce people's risk of developing bowel cancer, by detecting and removing pre-cancerous adenomas in the lining of the bowel. If bowel cancer is found early through screening, it's easier to treat and there's a better chance of recovery.

BowelScreen age range

BowelScreen was established in 2012 for people aged 60 to 69. In October 2023, we began offering BowelScreen to people aged 59 to 69, and in 2025 we aim to expand the age range to people aged 58 to 70. Under the National Cancer Strategy, we are committed to increasing this age range down to age 55 and upwards to 74, subject to available funding.

We are expanding our age range gradually, in line with the HSE's [National Service Plan 2025](#), because we want to make sure everyone who does the screening test continues to have access to onward testing and treatment, if it is found to be needed.

All screening programmes are dynamic and responsive to change and all changes to population screening programmes must first be approved by the National Screening Advisory Committee (NSAC) on the basis of an evidence review. This independent committee makes recommendations to the Minister for Health and the Department of Health. A further extension of bowel screening to age 50 to 74 is under consideration by the Committee, which has asked the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) to consider the evidence for this proposal.

Being symptom aware

We continue to emphasise the importance of being symptom aware, no matter what age you are. Information on symptoms is available on our [website](#). We encourage anyone with symptoms to contact their GP who will give them appropriate advice on follow-up care.

Teach Óstaí an Rí, 200 Sráid Parnell, Baile Átha Cliath D01 A3Y8. King's Inn House, 200 Parnell Street, Dublin 1, D01 A3Y8.
☎ 353 1 865 9300 ✉ info@screeningservice.ie www.screeningservice.ie





An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Scagthástála
National Screening Service

For other queries, programme participants can call our Freephone information line on 1800 45 45 55 or email: info@bowelscreen.ie.

I trust this information is of assistance to you, but should you have any further queries please contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Fiona Murphy,
Chief Executive.

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An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Scagthástála
National Screening Service



BreastCheck
An Clár Náisiúnta Scagthástála Ciock
The National Breast Screening Programme



CervicalCheck
AN CLÁR NÁISIÚNTA SCAGTHÁSTÁLA CERVICHEACS
THE NATIONAL CERVICAL SCREENING PROGRAMME



BowelScreen
An Clár Náisiúnta Scagthástála Púitige
The National Bowel Screening Programme



Diabetic RetinaScreen
An Clár Náisiúnta Scagthástála Riatraí do Dhiabéitigh
The National Diabetic Retinal Screening Programme