give you simple steps for good bowel health
This booklet contains simple steps you can take to help achieve good bowel health. This is important to everyone, as these small changes will help your digestive system to work well, and help reduce your risk of bowel cancer.

This advice is intended for people who do not currently suffer from any bowel conditions. Before making any drastic changes to your lifestyle and/or diet you should always speak to your doctor.

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Our digestive system is set up to give us water, energy, vitamins and minerals from the food we eat and the liquids we drink. When there’s a problem our body suffers and we do not work at our best. The more we take care of our diet and help our digestive system, the better we feel.

1. **Mouth** Food and water enter via the mouth. As we chew, we start to break down the food.

2. **Oesophagus** The oesophagus carries the food and liquids to the stomach for digestion.

3. **Stomach** The stomach produces acid and enzymes that break down the foods when they are in the stomach. The muscles in the stomach walls also help this process by mixing up and breaking down the food. The partly digested food is then released into the small bowel.

4. **Pancreas** The pancreas produces enzymes that are important for digestion.

5. **Small bowel** Here the food is broken down further. The nutrients are then absorbed into the body. As the digested waste leaves the small bowel it enters the colon.

6. **Liver** The liver produces bile which helps to break down the fats in the food. This bile is stored in the gall bladder.

7. **Gallbladder** The gallbladder releases bile into the small bowel when food is eaten. Bile helps to break down fats in the food.

8. **Large bowel (a. colon & b. rectum)** The large bowel is made of the colon and the rectum. The colon absorbs water, and the muscles of the colon move the waste towards the rectum. The waste is held in the rectum until it is ready to leave the body.

9. **Anus** The waste is passed through the anus as it leaves the body.
Eating for you

The Eatwell Plate

This plate shows how much of what you eat should come from each food group. This includes everything you eat during the day, including snacks.

Top tip
Chew your food well

Bread, rice, potatoes, pasta and other starchy foods

Fruit and vegetables

Meat, fish, eggs, beans & other non-dairy sources of protein

Milk and dairy foods

Foods and drinks high in fat and/or sugar

Be aware of portion sizes

- Don’t overload your plate. If you are still hungry, why not have some fruit after your meal.
- A healthy breakfast is the best way to start the day.
- Be wary of ‘large’ or ‘value-sized’ offers, often they give you more food than you need.

Fact
The energy in the food we eat is measured in calories. Recommended daily calorie intake is around 2000 calories per day for women and 2500 for men.
Fibres is an important part of a healthy diet. It keeps everything moving through your digestive system.

- Choose **wholegrain** or **brown bread** for sandwiches and toast. Choose **brown rice** or **brown pasta** over white.
- Start the day with a **high fibre meal**. Porridge and wholegrain cereals are good examples.
- Don’t forget **fruit** and **vegetables** are a great source of fibre. Another good reason to get your 5 A DAY.

**Top tips**

**Seeds** - not just for birds! Sprinkle pumpkin seeds on your cereal or salad.

**Nuts** - always go for the unsalted variety. Try these in your stir frys or pasta bake.

**Top tip**

To get a daily dose of fibre try a baked potato with baked beans.
Five for good health

We all know eating five portions of fruit and vegetables a day forms part of a healthy, balanced diet, but do you know how to get your five a day?

Fruit and vegetables can make great snacks.

Aim for 2-3 per day. Try these:
- Carrot sticks
- Cherry tomatoes
- A handful of grapes
- Fruit skewers – great for kids!
- A couple of apples

Ways to get your 5 A DAY

Meal ideas:

- **Breakfast** - A banana chopped up and added to your cereal
- **Lunch** - Vegetable soup
- **Dinner** - Add a side salad to your meal
- **Dinner** - Include some carrots or peppers in your pasta sauce

Top tip
- Frozen, juiced, canned, and dried fruit and vegetables all count

Top tip
- Fruit salad works for breakfast, lunch and dinner
Add your left over veg to some stock = instant soup

Budget

Did you know
Fruit juice only counts as one of your five a day no matter how many glasses

Budget

Did you know
Blend your left over fruit salad to create a delicious smoothie

Did you know
Variety is key - have as many different types and colours of fruit and veg every day

Did you know
Potatoes don’t count as one of your five a day

Did you know
Fruit juice only counts as one of your five a day no matter how many glasses
Positive protein

Avoid processed meats as much as possible.

These are meats that have been preserved by smoking, curing, salting or adding preservatives. This includes: **bacon, ham, salami, sausages and burgers**. These should be an occasional treat rather than every day!

Limit your red meat intake. Have no more than 500g (cooked weight) per week. This includes: **beef, pork, lamb and goat**.

**How much is that?**

One portion of spaghetti bolognese with **minced beef = 140g red meat**
and a pork chop = **75g red meat**

Try having chicken, fish or a vegetarian option instead.

Peas, beans and lentils are a source of protein and are high in fibre too!

Try grilling fish instead of frying it.

Check out our website for recipe ideas: www.bowelcanceruk.org.uk

**Budget**

Don’t forget tinned and frozen fish. They have longer use-by dates plus they are tasty and cheap!
Keep hydrated by drinking water throughout the day.

Why not try:
Herbal teas  
Fruit juices

Alcohol
Know your limits. Have alcohol free days every week and make sure you have no more than:

2-3 units a day for women  
3-4 units a day for men

Alcohol units
A pint of average strength of beer or larger = 2.8 units  
1 standard glass of wine (175ml) = 2.3 units  
1 measure of spirits = 1 unit
Keep active

Exercise helps you to maintain a healthy body weight and makes you feel good.

Get started

Ideally, try to do 30 minutes exercise at least five times a week. Try starting with 10 minutes and enjoy doing more and more.

Exercise doesn’t have to be about working out in a gym. Enjoy it!

Don’t forget if you miss a day don’t give up, just start again tomorrow.

Top tip
These all count:
Climbing
Dancing
Swimming
Cycling
Symptoms

Symptoms of bowel cancer can include:

- Bleeding from your bottom and/or blood in your poo
- A change in bowel habit lasting for 3 weeks or more especially to looser or runny poo
- Unexplained weight loss
- Extreme tiredness for no obvious reason
- A pain or lump in your tummy

You may experience one, some or none of these however if you have any concerns or if things just don’t feel right, go and see your doctor.

For more information please see:

- NHS Change4Life
  www.nhs.uk/Change4Life
- Drink aware
  www.drinkaware.co.uk
- NHS Live Well
  www.nhs.uk/livewell
- World Cancer Research Fund
  www.wcrf-uk.org
Bowel Cancer UK aims to save lives by raising awareness of bowel cancer, campaigning for best treatment and care and providing practical support and advice.

Get involved
There are many ways in which you can get involved in helping to raise funds and awareness for Bowel Cancer UK. To find out more visit:
www.bowelcanceruk.org.uk

Donate
To make a donation online visit www.bowelcanceruk.org.uk/donate or call 020 7381 9711

How we can help?
If you would like to find out more about helping to improve your bowel health visit our website or call our Bowel Cancer Information and Support Service on freephone:
0800 8 40 35 40 support@bowelcanceruk.org.uk

To find out more about this product, or tell us what you think, please call us on 020 7386 4007 or email feedback@bowelcancer.org.uk

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