

Remember

- You can have bowel cancer without any warning signs.
- If you're 50 or older, don't wait for warning signs – ask your doctor or health worker today about doing a test for bowel cancer.
- Doing a test can help find bowel cancer early.
- If found early, nearly all cases of bowel cancer can be cured.
- Whatever your age, see your doctor or health worker immediately if you notice any warning signs – it probably won't be cancer but you need to make sure.

Cut your risk of bowel cancer

You can reduce your risk of bowel and other cancers with a healthy lifestyle. Try to:

- limit or avoid grog (alcohol)
- keep off the smokes
- stick to a healthy weight
- eat lots of fresh fruit and vegies and avoid fatty foods
- be active
- see your doctor or health worker if you notice any unusual changes to your body or djillawah habits.



Organisation details:



A guide to bowel cancer screening



It's time to have a yarn about bowel cancer

Bowel cancer is the second most common cancer affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island men and women.

It can happen at any age but is more common after the age of 50. People with a history of bowel cancer in their close family are at a slightly higher risk.

Most bowel cancers are curable if found early.

Finding bowel cancer early

Bowel cancer is a growth that starts in the lining of your moom (back passage). Sometimes bowel cancer can be present without any warning signs.

Cancer Council recommends a simple test that can be done in the home every two years from the age of 50. The test can find bowel cancer early before it spreads; so don't wait until you have warning signs.

The test is quick and easy. It looks for tiny amounts of blood in your coonie (poo). If there is blood in your coonie, you will need more tests to make sure you don't have bowel cancer. In most cases the blood will be from something like piles (haemorrhoids) or because you are straining too hard, but it's important to make sure.

Warning signs

You can have bowel cancer without noticing anything is wrong.

When warning signs do appear, they can include:

- bleeding from the moom
- feeling tired for no reason
- loss of weight for no reason
- changes in your normal djillawah (toilet) habits.

If you experience any of these signs, you should see your doctor or health worker immediately.

Because if it is bowel cancer, finding it early gives you the best chance of recovery.

Where can I get a test?

People who are 50, 55 or 65 will receive a free test in the mail as part of the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program.

If you are 50 or over and not one of these ages, ask your local health service where you can get a bowel cancer test to do at home.

You can also buy one from Cancer Council Victoria by calling the Helpline on 13 11 20 or online at www.cancervic.org.au/boweltest.

The tests are \$30 or \$22 for pensioners and Health Care Card holders.

Jill Gallagher is a Gunditjmara woman and bowel cancer survivor

It's time for our community to have a yarn about bowel cancer because finding it early could save your life.

The fact is, you can have bowel cancer without any warning signs, or if there are symptoms, they can be vague and easy to dismiss as something else. I was diagnosed with bowel cancer at the age of 54. The year leading up to my diagnosis was really hectic, so I put feeling tired all the time down to working too hard and being busy. I noticed a change in my bowel habits but I always blamed it on something I'd eaten or a bug. It never occurred to me it could be anything more serious.

My advice is, don't take the chance; if you notice anything unusual, see your doctor or health worker.

And if you're 50 or over, don't wait for signs – there's a simple home test you can do that can find bowel cancer early. It could save your life.

