

Introducing FOB Test Friday

Friday 25th February 2011

Bowel cancer kills more Australians than breast cancer, yet is more preventable and if detected early, curable in 90% of cases.

It's our second biggest cancer killer, yet few know much about the disease, its symptoms, how and when to test for it, and who is most at risk of developing it.

It's for these reasons that Let's Beat Bowel Cancer, an initiative of Cabrini Health, has launched the FOB Test Friday campaign.

What is FOB Test Friday?

FOB Test Friday is a special day held on the last Friday of February each year (this year it falls on the 25th of February) to promote awareness of the home Faecal Occult Blood (FOB) Test - which can detect invisible traces of blood in the toilet water after a bowel motion.

Every positive FOB Test has the potential to save that person's life.

The key goal of FOB Test Friday is to encourage every Australian who is 50 or over to complete an annual home FOB Test.

GP's are a vital part of the FOB Test Friday campaign.

You can help increase the success of this campaign, and potentially save many lives, by educating your patients about bowel cancer, answering questions and encouraging your patients - especially those who are 50 and over - to complete an annual home FOB Test.

Consumers can purchase a home FOB Test via letsbeatbowelcancer.com or at selected pharmacies.

Your patients can order a FOB Test or find out more at letsbeatbowelcancer.com



FOB Test Friday

home test to help prevent bowel cancer
letsbeatbowelcancer.com

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Liz Smart, grandmother and author, was diagnosed with bowel cancer following a positive FOB Test.

Fast facts

- Bowel cancer is the most common internal cancer affecting Australian men and women
- There are more than 14,000 new cases of bowel cancer diagnosed in Australia each year
- Every week, bowel cancer kills almost 100 Australian men & women - that's around one Australian every 2 hours
- Bowel cancer is Australia's second biggest cancer killer after lung cancer
- 90% of bowel cancers occur in people over the age of 50, but can occur at any age
- Early detection, through regular screening, greatly increases the chances of survival. Research shows that 9 out of 10 bowel cancers detected early are successfully treated.

Let's Beat Bowel Cancer is a not-for-profit community awareness program dedicated to saving lives through improved bowel cancer research, education and prevention.

Case Study

FOB Test saves life

Mrs L.S. a 68 year-old female, presented to her general practitioner for an annual check up. As part of that assessment, her doctor provided her with a Faecal Occult Blood Test kit to be used at home.

The test proved positive for occult blood, and Mrs L.S. was referred to a colorectal surgeon for colonoscopy, which revealed an ulcerating proliferative lesion at the recto-sigmoid junction.

Biopsies confirmed adenocarcinoma. It was noted that she was in good health, without any symptoms that were of a concern to her, apart from an occasional smear of blood on the toilet paper. She emphasised that she had no change in bowel habit and no abdominal pain. There was no family history of bowel cancer or bowel polyps.

Mrs L.S. was advised that she would require an anterior resection with end-to-end anastomosis and that a temporary defunctioning stoma might be required.

Preoperative staging investigations did not reveal evidence of metastatic disease, although a retro-sternal mass was noted and was thought to be a thymoma. Subsequently a curative hand-assisted laparoscopic low anterior section was performed together with a temporary diverting ileostomy.

Histopathology revealed three of thirty lymph nodes contained metastatic adenocarcinoma, and the patient was advised to undergo adjuvant chemotherapy. A six-month course was completed. The ileostomy was subsequently closed, and Mrs L.S. is now approaching two years free of the disease.

The retro-sternal mass was proved to be a thymoma and has been successfully removed. Mrs L.S. continues regular reviews.

Surgeon's comment

In this instance, the bowel cancer was detected following a Faecal Occult Blood Test. The intermittent blood on the toilet paper may have been due to small haemorrhoids, but if it had been reported sooner, the cancer might have been discovered at any earlier stage potentially obviating the need for adjuvant chemotherapy. Macroscopic bleeding mandates anorectal examination and in many instances colonoscopy. A negative Faecal Occult Blood Test in the context of intermittent macroscopic bleeding still requires investigation.

Emeritus Professor Adrian Polglase

Colorectal Surgeon

Chairman, Let's Beat Bowel Cancer, Cabrini Health.

Frequently asked patient questions and suggested responses

Why should I test for bowel cancer?

Testing, via either a home test or colonoscopy, is the most common and appropriate way to detect the early signs of bowel cancer, a condition that often has no symptoms. The aim of testing is to find polyps (an early sign of bowel cancer) or to find cancer early - when it is easier to treat and cure. While no screening process is 100% effective, early testing could save your life.

Who should test?

In accordance with Gastroenterological Society of Australia guidelines, Let's Beat Bowel Cancer recommends annual bowel screening for all Australian men and women aged 50 and over. If you have a personal or family history of bowel cancer or polyps, have blood in your stool or other bowel symptoms, you should immediately consult your GP, who might refer you for specialist screening.

Is there a 'bowel cancer gene'?

Just as some people have a 'breast cancer gene', which predisposes them to a greater risk of contracting the disease, some families have an inherited genetic predisposition for bowel cancer. If you have had two members of your immediate family (such as parents, siblings or grandparents) diagnosed with bowel cancer, or who have died from the disease under the age of 50, you should consult your GP, who might refer you for specialist screening.

What about the Government's screening program?

The Federal Government's National Bowel Cancer screening program - which offered free home bowel cancer test kits to Australians turning 50, 55 or 65 - finished on 31 December 2010. It is understood that the Government is currently reviewing the program and is expected to make an announcement regarding a new program in the next Federal budget. However, until then, all people over 50, without a family history of bowel cancer or any bowel symptoms, are encouraged to complete an annual home FOB Test. If you have a personal or family history of bowel cancer or polyps, have blood in your stool or other bowel symptoms, you should immediately consult your GP, who can offer advice, including about whether you require a referral for specialist testing.

Disclaimer: The statements, opinions and conclusions outlined on this review are those of the writer Emeritus Professor Adrian Polglase and not those of Cabrini Health or any of its representatives.

How can your patients obtain a bowel screening kit?

- **Online** Purchase via our website letsbeatbowelcancer.com
- **Pharmacy** Ask your local pharmacist about bowel screening
- **GP** Ask your GP about bowel screening

Let's Beat Bowel Cancer and Cabrini Health do not receive any benefit, financial or otherwise, for promoting any bowel screen test.

