

Important information for GPs: National Bowel Cancer Screening Program.

Evidence shows that a recommendation by a primary care provider is a key motivator for patients to screen with the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program (NBCSP). General Practitioners have a number of important roles in the NBCSP, including encouraging participation, managing participants who have a positive Faecal Occult Blood Test (FOBT) result, referring for further investigations such as colonoscopy, and reporting to the National Cancer Screening Register (NCSR) to support quality data outcomes.

Diagnostic accuracy of the FOBT

FOBT is the test of choice for population bowel cancer screening as described in the [current national clinical practice guidelines](#). The NBCSP commences from age 50 in asymptomatic individuals. Around 95 per cent of the population are at near-average risk of bowel cancer and should be screened by FOBT, rather than colonoscopy. The FOBT detects microscopic amounts of blood in the stool. Although the NBCSP requires two samples to be taken, a single positive FOBT is an indication to refer for a colonoscopy; repeating a positive FOBT is not recommended as bleeding from polyps or cancer may be intermittent.

National Cancer Screening Register (NCSR)

The NCSR is a data repository that provides primary health care professionals better access to cervical and bowel cancer screening information through the Healthcare Provider Portal (HPP).

The HPP allows those with a provider number and Provider Digital Access (PRODA) account to communicate with the NCSR to:

- access a patient's bowel cancer screening history
- submit program forms
- view and update a patient's details
- manage a patient's participation i.e., opt in/opt out, defer, or cease a patient's correspondence with the NBCSP
- order a replacement screening kit if a patient's kit is lost, expired or has never been received.

The HPP is available for clinical information software integration with Best Practice, Communicare and MedicalDirector. More information on how to access the NCSR through the HPP can be found [here](#).

Public hospital referrals

A patient with at least one positive FOBT should have appropriate follow-up investigation(s), usually colonoscopy. If referring a patient for a colonoscopy to a public hospital, please use the mandated referral form. This can be accessed via the Department of Health website [here](#). Referral forms can be downloaded into practice software templates.

Impact of COVID-19 on bowel cancer screening

The NBCSP has not altered invitation rollout during the COVID-19 pandemic. A positive FOBT in the NBCSP is classified as Category 1 urgency and is therefore still fully supported on elective waitlists.



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