



# PATHOLOGY TESTS EXPLAINED

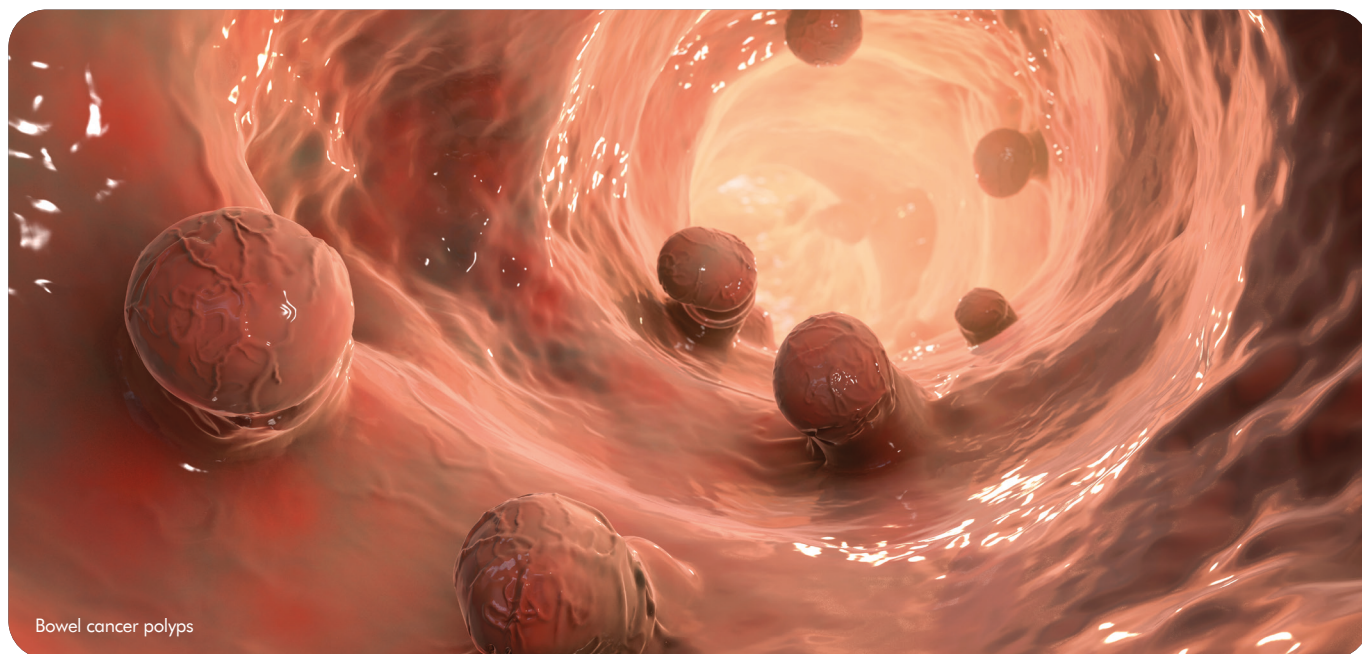
Information about pathology tests to help everyone take control of their health and make the right decisions about their care.

## WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT YOUR SCREENING TEST FOR BOWEL CANCER

The screening test for bowel cancer is an FOBT – or faecal occult blood test. This is a simple test where a sample of your stool is checked for blood, which can be an early sign of bowel cancer.

The FOBT detects small amounts of blood that are not visible by eye. A positive test will tell your doctor that you have bleeding occurring somewhere in your gastrointestinal tract. This blood loss could be due to several causes.

If the FOBT is positive for blood, more tests are done to find out what has caused the bleeding.



Bowel cancer polyps



### Who can have the test?

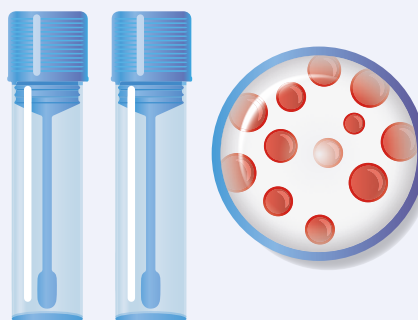
The test is offered as a way of detecting bowel cancer in people who do not have symptoms.

Australia's National Bowel Cancer Screening Program sends free test kits to people aged between 50 and 74 every two years. If you have symptoms your doctor is able to give you a collection kit.



### What happens?

Usually, two or three samples of stool, each collected on different days, are required. Collecting more than one sample helps make the test more accurate. The FOBT kit contains an instruction sheet that should be carefully followed on how to collect and store the samples. Usually, you will collect all samples then return them by posting them in a package provided in the kit or to your doctor/laboratory.



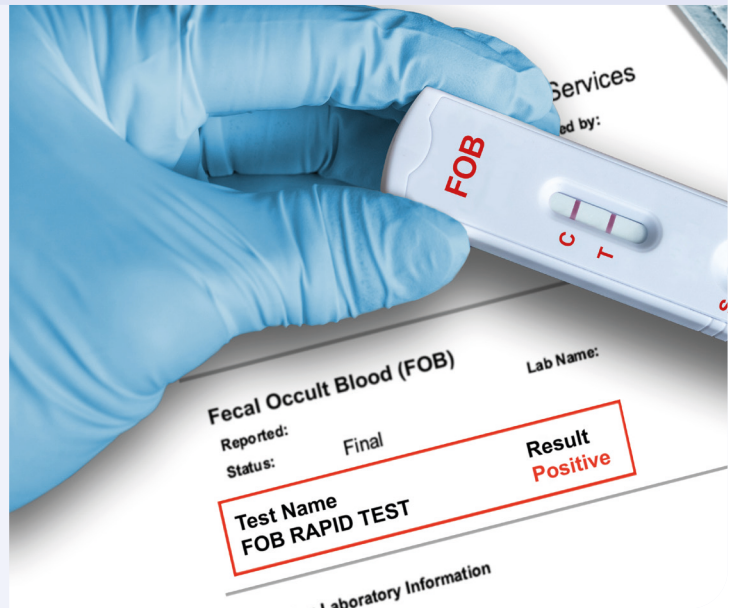


## What can your results tell you?

The FOBT result is negative for most people. However, this does not mean you do not have or can never develop bowel cancer. Some bowel cancers do not bleed or only bleed every now and then. This means everyone needs to have an FOBT every two years. It is important you let your doctor know if you have any symptoms of bowel cancer even if your test is negative.

A positive FOBT result indicates that blood has been detected in the stool. This bleeding can be due to many different things and does not necessarily indicate cancer. A positive test will be followed up with a further test, usually a colonoscopy, to find the source of the bleeding.

Colorectal cancer is a leading cause of cancer-related deaths and a FOBT can find colorectal cancer early when treatment is more effective.



## Having a medical test

The choice of tests your doctor makes will be based on your medical history and symptoms. Make sure you tell them everything you think might help.

You play a central role in making sure your test results are accurate. Do everything you can to make sure the information you provide is correct and follow instructions closely.

Talk to your doctor about any medication you are taking. Find out if you need to fast or stop any particular foods or supplements. These may affect your results.



## Questions to ask your doctor

- Why does this test need to be done?
- Do I need to prepare (such as fast or avoid medications) for the sample collection?
- Will an abnormal result mean I need further tests?
- How could it change the course of my care?
- What will happen next, after the test?

For more detailed information on these and many other tests go to [pathologytestsexplained.org.au](http://pathologytestsexplained.org.au)



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EXPLAINED

[www.pathologytestsexplained.org.au](http://www.pathologytestsexplained.org.au)

Pathology Tests Explained is the primary national source of consumer information on pathology testing. Information is written and edited by practising pathologists and scientists, including leading experts. This ensures integrity and accuracy.

Pathology Tests Explained is managed by a consortium of medical and scientific organisations representing pathology practice in Australia. More details at:  
[www.pathologytestsexplained.org.au/about](http://www.pathologytestsexplained.org.au/about)



Please use this QR code to access more information

## My Health Record

You'll find a direct link to the Pathology Tests Explained website embedded in the pathology results pages of your My Health Record and the my health app.

Click on the link to find information about what your tests are investigating or measuring and what your results can tell your doctor.