

New bowel cancer test gets green light with the public

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Almost everyone (98 per cent) who had the new bowel cancer test – soon to become part of the national screening programme – said they were glad to have gone through the experience, according to a study¹ published in the *Journal of Medical Screening*.

Cancer Research UK scientists asked 1020 people² who had had a flexible sigmoidoscopy test about any side-effects they experienced and their satisfaction with the procedure.

On balance satisfaction with the test was extremely high, with 97.9 per cent 'glad' they had had the test and 97.3 per cent saying they would encourage a friend to have it.

Flexible sigmoidoscopy, also known as Flexi-scope or bowel scope, is a one-off test that will be offered to all 55 year olds in England and will start to be rolled out in 2013 as part of the National [Bowel Cancer Screening Programme](#).

The test uses a [tiny camera](#) on a thin flexible plastic tube to find small growths or polyps inside the bowel. Any [polyps](#) found can be painlessly removed to prevent them developing into cancer. Unlike some [screening tests](#) that focus only on catching cancer early, this test also reduces the chance of bowel cancer developing.

Pauline Bennett, 65, who had the test as part of another trial said: "At first I was a bit unsure about having the test, particularly as I felt

perfectly healthy and hadn't had any bowel problems. I was also worried about it being painful and what they might find.

"But my fears were completely unfounded. The test was over very quickly and practically painless – just a tiny bit of discomfort. It's very reassuring to have had the test and know that I'm fine. I'd recommend anyone who gets an invitation to go and have it."

Dr Katie Robb, Cancer Research UK psychologist and lead author from the University of Glasgow said: "The overwhelmingly positive response in our study suggests that people who are invited to have the new test from March this year are likely to have a similarly favourable experience."

Bowel cancer is the third most common cancer in men and the second most common in women. Flexible sigmoidoscopy screening has been found to reduce the occurrence of bowel cancer in people aged 55-64 by a third.

Hazel Nunn, head of health evidence and information at Cancer Research UK, said: "It's encouraging to see that in this study the vast majority of people who had the test felt, on balance, glad that they had done so."

"This kind of bowel screening has the potential to prevent thousands of cases of bowel cancer each year once it is rolled out."

Provided by Cancer Research UK

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