

Bowel screening kit with extras could help save more lives

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Thousands more people would take part in bowel cancer screening if the kit included extras, such as gloves and "poo catchers", according to a Cancer Research UK study published today in *Biomed Research International*.

The London study looked at how to increase the number of people who take part in the NHS Bowel Cancer Screening Programme (BCSP), with fewer than six in ten 60 to 74 year olds in England returning the kit.

It found that more people took part when they were also sent special latex-free gloves and "poo catchers", and a recommendation from Cancer Research UK that people take part, alongside a local advertising campaign that included posters at bus stops and TV ads in GP surgeries.

Bowel cancer screening uptake rose from around 43 to 50 per cent among 60-69 year olds and from 47 to 54 per cent among 70-74 year olds.

This still falls short of the target of 60 per cent uptake, and the 75 percent ambition recently announced in the independent taskforce's cancer strategy for England.

But it means, if all the extras were run together for a whole year, nearly 26,000 extra people could take up screening in London alone.

It is estimated that the NHS bowel [cancer screening](#) programme could

save 1,800 to 2,400 lives each year in England by 2025.

The pilot study was conducted by Cancer Research UK, along with support from NHS England (London region), Public Health England, the Department of Health, and the English NHS Bowel Cancer Screening Programme.

Becky White, lead author and senior analyst at Cancer Research UK, said: "Some people are hesitant to do the test. Some find taking and storing samples unpleasant; others have difficulty completing the test and some misunderstand the instructions. But our findings are encouraging and have shown ways to overcome these barriers by offering practical improvements."

Sara Hiom, Cancer Research UK's director of early diagnosis, said: "The chances of surviving [bowel cancer](#) are much greater when it's caught at an early stage. And screening is a crucial way to catch the disease early, before symptoms develop. Making the test easier for people, raising awareness, identifying why certain people don't take the test and working out what can be done to address barriers, are all vital if we are to encourage more people to want to take part.

"We do understand that the NHS needs extra investment as they are already overstretched. But earlier diagnosis and earlier treatment are key to reducing the future burden of high treatment costs for the NHS.

"We encourage people to complete the [test](#) and post their kits back - it may be easier than you think and it really could save your life."

More information: White, B. et al. Piloting the Impact of Three Interventions on Guaiac Faecal Occult Blood Test Uptake within the NHS Bowel Cancer Screening Programme. *BioMed Research International* (2015)

Provided by Cancer Research UK

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