

**KIWIS  
HELPING  
OTHER  
KIWIS  
BEAT  
BOWEL  
CANCER**



**Bowel Cancer**  
NEW ZEALAND

# KIWIS HELPING OTHER KIWIS BEAT BOWEL CANCER

In 2010, a group of bowel cancer survivors and whānau joined forces with industry experts and founded our much-needed charity. Bowel Cancer New Zealand launched at Parliament that year and continues to be governed by our Board, who have all been personally affected by this disease.

Bowel Cancer New Zealand is a nationwide, patient-focused charity dedicated to reducing the impact of bowel cancer in Aotearoa.

## We do this through:

**Support:** We help patients recover from treatment and support those living with bowel cancer and their whānau.

**Education:** We create and share information about preventing bowel cancer with the public and health professionals.

**Awareness:** We work to spread the word about the high incidence of bowel cancer in New Zealand – and its signs and symptoms.

**Advocacy:** We continue to lobby for nationwide screening to detect bowel cancer earlier, and we advocate for more testing and drug funding for this beatable disease.

**Research:** We support world-class researchers in their vital work to develop new treatments and drugs.

## Our vision

We may never completely eradicate bowel cancer, but we can catch it earlier – when it's most treatable through better screening, treatments, and support.

*That's why we won't stop until we've beaten apathy, beaten embarrassment, beaten the lack of awareness and funding... and above all, beaten bowel cancer.*

## Facts

Bowel cancer – also known as colorectal or colon cancer – is any cancer that affects the colon (large bowel) or rectum (also known as rectal cancer).

Most bowel cancers start as benign growths on the bowel wall called polyps. These growths are more common as people get older. Although most polyps never develop into bowel cancer, some can if left undetected.

## Important statistics

- New Zealand has one of the highest rates of bowel cancer in the world<sup>1</sup>.
- Bowel cancer is the second-highest cause of cancer death in New Zealand.<sup>2</sup>
- More than 3,000 people are diagnosed with bowel cancer, and over 1,200 die from this disease every year.<sup>2</sup>
- Māori and Pacific patients are more likely to present at an emergency department for their first diagnosis and have a more advanced stage at presentation.<sup>3,2</sup>
- While bowel cancer is more common in those over 50 years old, it affects people of all ages.<sup>2</sup>
- Over 350 people aged under 50 are diagnosed each year.<sup>4</sup>
- Bowel cancer affects both genders, but men are at increased risk compared to women.<sup>1</sup>
  - The most recent NZ data shows men 38.3 per 100,000 with females 29.7 per 100,000.<sup>5</sup>
- 12% of bowel cancers are detected annually in New Zealanders aged 50-59 years.<sup>2</sup>
  - For Māori, 1 in 5 (22%) are diagnosed in this age range each year. That equates to 60 Māori patients.<sup>6</sup>
- 39% of New Zealanders are diagnosed aged 60-74 years<sup>7</sup> (the current screening age).

<sup>1</sup> World Cancer Report 2014 Edited by Bernard W. Stewart and Christopher P. Wild, ©International Agency for Research on Cancer, 2014

<sup>2</sup> New Zealand Ministry of Health (2016). Cancer: New registrations and deaths 2013. Wellington, New Zealand: Ministry of Health

<sup>3</sup> Robson B, Harris R (eds). 2007. Hauora: Maori Standards of Health IV. A study of the years 2000–2005. Wellington, New Zealand, Te Ropu Rangahau Hauora a Eru Pomare.

<sup>4</sup> Ministry of Health. (2018) Selected Cancers 2014, 2015 & 2016. Wellington: Ministry of Health.

<sup>5</sup> World Health Organization, 2020: International Agency for Research on Cancer. 'Cancer Today - New Zealand Fact sheet - p554. (Source: Glabocan 2020) <https://gco.iarc.fr/today/data/factsheets/populations/554-new-zealand-fact-sheets.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Ministry of Health. Selected Cancers 2013, 2014 & 2015 (Provisional). Wellington: Ministry of Health, 2016.

<sup>7</sup> Ministry of Health, New cancer registrations 2018, interactive tables: <https://www.health.govt.nz/publication/new-cancer-registrations-2018>

## Early detection is key

- Bowel cancer is curable in 90% of cases if caught early.<sup>8</sup> If a diagnosis is delayed, the cancer may advance, leading to a worse outcome and less chance of a cure.

### Common signs and symptoms:

- Bleeding from the bottom (rectal bleeding).
- Change of bowel motions or habits that come and go over several weeks.
- Severe, persistent, or occasional abdominal pain.
- Anaemia (iron deficiency).
- A lump or mass in the abdomen.
- Tiredness and loss of weight for no obvious reason.

### Risk factors:

- Increasing age (50+).
- A personal or family history of bowel cancer and polyps.
- A diet high in red meat and/or processed meats and animal fats.
- Obesity or being overweight.
- Genetic factors associated with bowel cancer such as Lynch syndrome.
- Inflammatory bowel disease (includes Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis).
- Diabetes.

### To lower your risk of developing bowel cancer:

- Choose a diet high in vegetables and fruit, limiting red and processed meats.
- Limit or eliminate alcohol and smoking.
- Exercise regularly (five times a week).
- Tell your GP if someone in your family has had bowel cancer.

**Having one or more risk factors doesn't mean you will get bowel cancer. While no cancer is completely preventable, you can lower your risk of bowel cancer by eating a healthy diet and exercising regularly.**

## Screening

Bowel Cancer NZ has been the leading voice calling for a National Bowel Screening Programme (NBSP) since 2010.

Bowel cancer can develop without any warning signs, but 90% of cases can be treated successfully if caught early.<sup>8</sup> Screening is one of the most effective ways to find bowel cancer early before it spreads.

The government-run NBSP is free for eligible men and women aged 60-74 every two years and is for people who do not have obvious symptoms of bowel cancer.

Bowel Cancer NZ is calling on the government to act and deliver on two key demands: for all New Zealanders in their fifties to be screened for bowel cancer by 2025; and for Māori in this age group to be screened immediately.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup>American Cancer Society. Cancer Facts & Figures 2021. Atlanta: American Cancer Society; 2021. Pg 15

<sup>9</sup>Bowel Cancer New Zealand. 'Call for action 2025' January 2020. Sourced from: [www.bowelcancernz.org.nz/what-we-do/advocacy](http://www.bowelcancernz.org.nz/what-we-do/advocacy)

## How your donations help us beat bowel cancer

Bowel Cancer NZ receives no government funding and relies solely on the generosity of our donors to spread the word about bowel cancer, increase awareness of prevention and symptoms, support patients, promote regular bowel screening and research ... and ultimately, save lives.

### Free counselling & physio sessions

Bowel cancer can take a huge emotional toll on patients and their whānau. So, we provide free counselling for patients, survivors, direct family members and primary caregivers.

Rehabilitative physiotherapy is important in recovering from bowel cancer treatment and surgery. Therefore, we fund free sessions for patients and survivors.

### Nurse support

Our registered nurse is available through our freephone 0800 helpline or our website chatbot to answer questions and provide support and information for patients and whānau.

### Education programmes & resources

The more informed we all are, the better the chances of preventing bowel cancer. We provide a range of educational programmes and resources, including workplace and community seminars.

### Research & advocacy

Apart from early detection, research is the most important way to save lives. Bowel Cancer NZ continuously supports a variety of research projects. We're currently funding research into early onset colorectal cancer and a Kaupapa Māori qualitative study.

Our latest advocacy project is outlined in our Call to Action 2025. This is a powerful plea to all levels of government and community to work together to achieve seven key calls to action designed to significantly reduce the impact of bowel cancer by 2025.

We strongly advocate for more funded drugs for bowel cancer patients and have collaborated with Patient Voice Aotearoa and The Medicine Gap to help Kiwis live.

## HOW WE'RE MAKING A DIFFERENCE

**28** 

Education talks  
& events

**140** 

Patients funded for  
physio and counselling

**1,158** 

Online support  
group members



**1,337**

Patients & whānau  
supported by our nurse  
through our helpline,  
chatbot and email

**342** 

Bowel screening kits  
sent out

**139,400**

Website visitors



**12,000**

Education &  
support resources  
downloaded

Sourced: Jan – Dec 2021

## Key messages

1. Thanks to your generosity, Bowel Cancer NZ can help the 3,000+ Kiwis diagnosed each year beat bowel cancer. Supporting our mahi means we can continue to help patients and their whānau through our support services; by educating communities and raising awareness of bowel cancer symptoms; advocating for patients; and funding research into treatments, and ultimately, a cure.
2. Ngā mihi, thank you! The money you fundraise helps beat a lack of funding, beat embarrassment, beat ignorance, beat apathy, and above all, beat bowel cancer.
3. Your koha/donation goes towards vital research, awareness, advocacy and support for the many Kiwis living with bowel cancer. You can learn about the important work Bowel Cancer New Zealand does at [bowelcancernz.org.nz](https://bowelcancernz.org.nz)
4. Every donation, no matter how big or small, counts! You'll be helping fund Bowel Cancer NZ's free counselling and physio rehab programmes, awareness and education campaigns, research and advocacy to influence the long-term survival of bowel cancer patients, and our nurse support service.
5. Bowel Cancer NZ focuses on providing tangible support for patients, increasing awareness of bowel cancer, education around prevention and symptoms, promoting regular bowel screening and research ... and ultimately, saving lives.

## Need support?

If you or someone you love has been diagnosed with bowel cancer, we're here to help.

Our registered nurse, **Victoria Thompson**, is available Monday to Thursday 10am – 4pm by phone on **0800 BCNZ NURSE (0800 226 968)**, via our website chatbot and by email [here4you@bowelcancernz.org.nz](mailto:here4you@bowelcancernz.org.nz)



### For further information

Visit our website: [bowelcancernz.org.nz](https://bowelcancernz.org.nz)

Charities Registration Number: CC 44166

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TREATABLE  
=BEATABLE=

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