

Ngā kōrero pono mō te mate  
pukupuku whēkau

## Bowel cancer facts

A guide for communities in Aotearoa.



### At a glance...

- Bowel cancer is also known as colorectal or colon cancer.
- Cancer is a disease caused by a series of changes to DNA which results in the uncontrolled growth of abnormal cells. Most bowel cancers start as benign growths on the wall of the bowel called 'polyps'.
- 90% of bowel cancers are curable if caught early.

**"If you have any symptoms which aren't settling, trust your gut instinct. Just go and get checked, even if you think it's nothing."**

DR ANNE MATHIESON,  
BOWEL CANCER SURVIVOR

### Bowel cancer

Bowel cancer affects the colon (large bowel) or rectum (also known as rectal cancer). The difference between the two is their location.

### How bowel cancer begins

Bowel cancer develops when there are a series of mutations to the cells that line the bowel, which results in the uncontrolled growth of those cells. Initially, these cells develop into polyps which are growths that can be flat or grow on stalks from the bowel wall. These growths are more common as people get older. Although most polyps never develop into bowel cancer, some can if left undetected.

If untreated, the cancer continues to grow through the bowel wall and then metastasise. The most common places for bowel cancer to spread are the liver and lungs.

Bowel cancer can be easy to miss. It is important to know the symptoms, and if they persist, follow up with your doctor.

Still concerned? Consider the following options:

- Get a second opinion.
- Go privately for a colonoscopy.
- Discuss private FIT testing as an option or a CT colonography with your GP.



### Want to know more?

Visit our website for more information on bowel cancer facts.  
[bowelcancernz.org.nz](http://bowelcancernz.org.nz) > What is bowel cancer  
> Bowel cancer facts



### Helpful tip

You can purchase BowelScreen Aotearoa kits from the screening page on our website.



### NEED SUPPORT?

Contact our bowel cancer support nurse:  
Email: [here4you@bowelcancernz.org.nz](mailto:here4you@bowelcancernz.org.nz)  
Phone: 0800 BCNZ NURSE (226 968)

Join our private Facebook group:  
[bowelcancernz.org.nz](http://bowelcancernz.org.nz) > Support > Finding Support

### CONTACT US

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