

Cancer screening eligibility

Bowel screening

Eligible participants: Australians aged 50-74

Screening process and test type:

- The bowel screening test is an immunochemical faecal occult blood test (iFOBT) that looks for traces of blood in bowel motion.
- Eligible people receive a free bowel screening test in the mail every 2 years from the age of 50.
- The screening kits are sent to the recorded Medicare or Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) address. The test kit is completed at home and sent back in the post to the pathology laboratory for analysis.
- The iFOBT used in the program has a high degree of accuracy.¹

Key points:

- Bowel cancer is the second-most common cause of cancer death in Australia and, if detected early, can be successfully treated in more than 90% of cases.²
- Analysis of cancer screening outcomes in Australia found that, the risk of dying from bowel cancer was 40% lower for people aged 50–69 who were diagnosed through the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program than for those with bowel cancer diagnosed outside the program.³
- As per the 2017 Clinical Practice Guidelines for the Prevention, Early Detection and Management of Colorectal Cancer, the recommended screening strategy for those at average risk of bowel cancer and without relevant symptoms is iFOBT testing every two years; starting at 50 years of age and continuing to age 74 years.⁴

For more information or to order resources, visit cancerscreening.gov.au

Patients can check when they will receive a test kit at DoTheTest.com.au

Breast screening

Eligible participants: The BreastScreen program actively targets women aged 50–74 years; however, it is available to all women aged 40 years and over.

Screening process and test type:

- Mammogram every two years at a BreastScreen fixed site or the BreastScreen mobile van.
- Bookings are made via phone (13 20 50) or online at book.breastscreen.nsw.gov.au
- Women do not need a GP referral, but are more likely to screen when encouraged by their general practice.

Key points:

- Screening and assessment is free for eligible women via the BreastScreen service.
- BreastScreen mammograms are read by two to three radiologists specialised in breast cancer, using a closely monitored quality assurance process.
- Women should only be sent to private providers when symptomatic.

For more information or to order resources, visit breastscreen.nsw.gov.au

Cervical screening

Eligible participants: For women and people with a cervix aged 25 to 74 who have ever been sexually active.

- The Cervical Screening Test is for women who have had the HPV vaccination and those who have not been vaccinated.
- Women and people with a cervix are invited to take an exit screen from age 70 to 74. If the result is normal and there is no HPV, then the person can exit the program.

Screening process and test type:

- Cervical screening prevents cervical cancer. Almost all cervical cancers are caused by HPV infection that does not clear up. A Cervical Screening Test detects human papillomavirus (HPV).
- If HPV is found the test looks for any abnormal cells which can be monitored and if necessary, treated to prevent them from turning into cervical cancer.
- Well women and people with a cervix aged between 25 and 74, who have ever been sexually active, need to have a Cervical Screening Test every 5 years.
- From 1 July 2022 all NCSP participants aged 25-74 years old will have the choice to screen using either a self-collected vaginal sample or a clinician collected sample from the cervix, accessed through a health professional in both cases.
- The change to the self-collection policy is supported by recent evidence that demonstrates HPV tests performed on self-collected vaginal samples are as safe and accurate as HPV tests performed on samples from the cervix collected by a clinician.⁵
- Self-collection is for HPV testing only; meaning if a person tests HPV positive they will either be referred directly to colposcopy or will need to have a clinician-collected sample so that cervical cells can be examined to inform management recommendations.
- For both self-collected and clinician collected samples people should be given clear information by the supervising healthcare professional about the likelihood that HPV may be detected and, if so, what follow-up will be required.

Key points:

- Women and people with a cervix aged 20 to 24 can be considered for a single Cervical Screening Test (prior to turning 25) if they experienced sexual activity/abuse before the age of 14, and prior to HPV vaccination.
- To avoid out-of-pocket fees for your patients, please familiarise yourself with the Pathology Test Guide for Cervical and Vaginal Testing.
- Currently, only some laboratories are able to process self-collected samples. Health care providers will need to contact their laboratory to find out the situation in their area. No special kit is needed; the pathology laboratory will provide details on collection devices they can process.

For more information or to order resources, visit cancerscreening.gov.au or cancer.nsw.gov.au/how-we-help/screening-and-early-detection/cervical-screening

References:

1. Department of Health. National Bowel Cancer Screening: The role of general practice. Available at www.cancerscreening.gov.au/internet/screening/publishing.nsf/Content/role-of-GPs (accessed 19 Feb 2019).
2. O'Connell J, Maggard M and Ko C. Colon Cancer Survival Rates With the New American Joint Committee on Cancer Sixth Edition Staging. Intl J NCI 2004;Vol 96 No19:1420-1425.
3. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Analysis of cancer outcomes and screening behaviour for national cancer screening programs in Australia. Canberra: AIHW, 2018.
4. Cancer Council Australia. Colorectal Cancer Guidelines Working Party. Clinical practice guidelines for the prevention, early detection and management of colorectal cancer. Sydney: Cancer Council Australia, 2017.
5. Arbyn, M., et al., Detecting cervical precancer and reaching underscreened women by using HPV testing on self samples: updated meta-analyses. BMJ, 2018. 363: p. k4823

T: (02) 8374 5600
E: information@cancer.nsw.gov.au
W: cancer.nsw.gov.au

