General Practice and the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program

The National Bowel Cancer Screening Program saves lives – but it can only work with the support of general practices. The evidence is clear that a recommendation from a primary healthcare provider is an important motivator for participation in bowel cancer screening.

How does the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program work?

The Program mails eligible 50-74 year olds bowel screening kits to complete at home. The Program is expanding in stages and from 2019 people aged 50-74 years will be invited to screen every two years. The ages at which people will be invited are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Eligible Ages</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>50, 54, 55, 58, 60, 64, 68, 70, 72, 74</td>
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<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>50, 54, 58, 60, 62, 64, 66, 68, 70, 72, 74</td>
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<tr>
<td>from 2019</td>
<td>50, 52, 54, 56, 58, 60, 62, 64, 66, 68, 70, 72, 74</td>
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</tbody>
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Why is bowel screening important?

- Australia has one of the highest rates of bowel cancer in the world - around 17,000 people are diagnosed each year.
- If found early 9 out of 10 cases of bowel cancer can be successfully treated.
- Around 9 out of 10 Australians diagnosed with bowel cancer are over 50 years old.
- Faecal occult blood test screening is recommended at least every two years for people over the age of 50 who are at, or slightly above, average risk for bowel cancer (about 98% of the population).
How can practices access Program resources?
Resources can be downloaded and/or ordered from www.cancerscreening.gov.au/bowel under “Publications and Resources”.

What consumer resources are available to order?
- “A Gift for Living” - Poster, Flyer and Brochure
- Indigenous Fact Sheet and Flyer
- Translated posters, flyers and brochures in 19 languages

What health professional tools and resources are available?
The following resources for health professionals are available at www.cancerscreening.gov.au/health-professionals under “Role of General Practice”.

Resources to download
- NBCSP Fact Sheet – a general overview of the Program.
- GP Information Brochure - the role of GPs in the Program, the screening pathway, FOBTs, duty of care, and payment arrangements.
- Consultation Flipchart - for use with patients.

Online GP Education Videos
The website provides a link to a series of four short videos to provide GPs with an overview of the NBCSP has been developed by the Victoria Department of Health and Human Services and Cabrini Health. The videos cover the following topics: What is Screening, Classification of Risk, Referral to colonoscopy and Case Studies.

Online Webinar for Practice Nurses
This one-hour seminar developed by the Australian Primary Healthcare Nurses Association discusses bowel cancer, screening and how nurses working in general practice can approach bowel screening with patients.

Template letter for practices to send to 49 year olds to encourage participation
A letter signed by a person’s GP endorsing immunochemical Faecal Occult Blood Tests (FOBTs) has been shown to increase participation in screening. Practices can download a template letter from the website to send to 49 year old patients to encourage them do the test when they receive it around their 50th birthday.

For more information please email the Program at nbcsp@health.gov.au