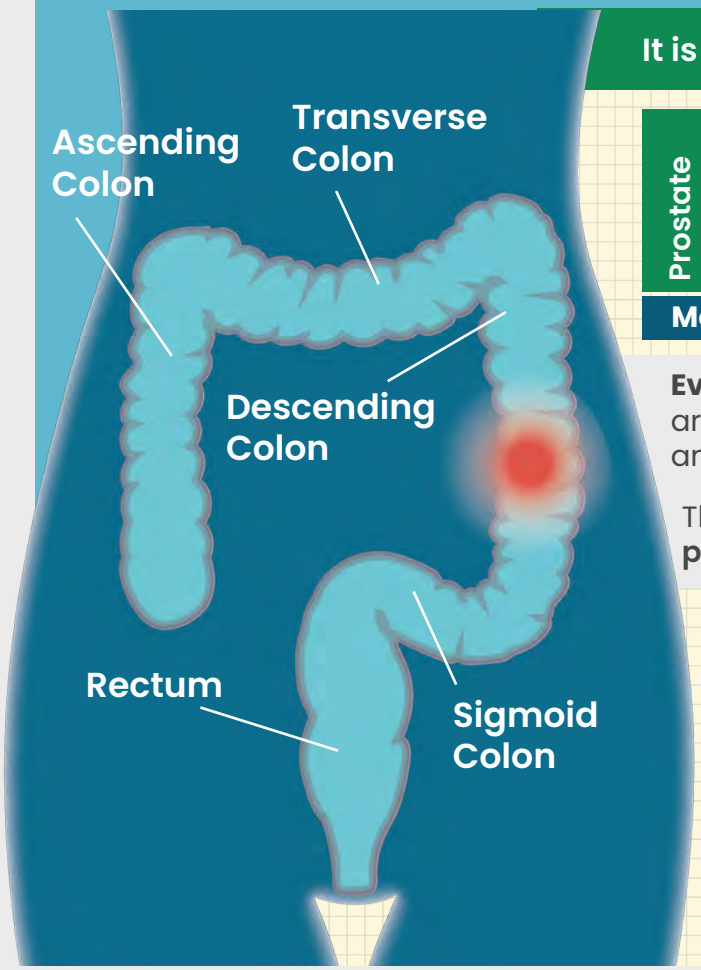
Bowel cancer

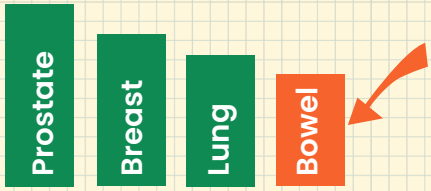
What is bowel cancer?

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Bowel cancer is cancer that's found anywhere in the large bowel, which includes the colon and rectum [1].



It is sometimes referred to as **colorectal cancer**.



Most common cancers

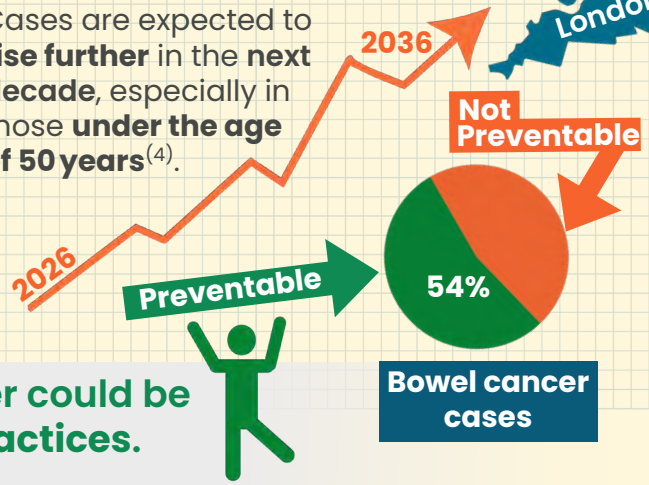
Bowel cancer is the **fourth most common** cancer diagnosed in the UK [2].



Every year more than **46,000** people are diagnosed with this serious and **life-changing condition** [3].

This is equivalent to the **number of people** who **run** the **London Marathon**.

Cases are expected to **rise further** in the **next decade**, especially in those **under the age of 50 years** [4].



Bowel cancer cases

Over half of all cases of bowel cancer could be prevented with healthier lifestyle practices.

Bowel cancer risk is influenced by several lifestyle factors.

The main preventable causes are [3]:

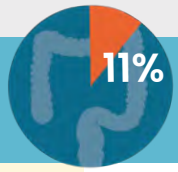


- Eating too much red and processed meat
- Smoking
- Ionising radiation
- Drinking alcohol
- Overweight and obesity
- Too little physical activity
- Eating too little fibre

Bowel cancer

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1 Maintain a healthy body weight



11% of bowel cancer cases in the UK are **caused by overweight and obesity**.



Being **overweight** or **obese increases the risk** of developing bowel cancer[5].

The **risk** is **48% higher** for **men who are obese**, compared to men who are a **healthy weight**[6].

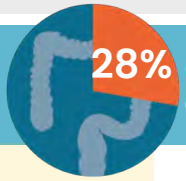
Having a **healthy diet** and **active lifestyle** can support **reaching** and maintaining a **healthy weight**. People following a **plant-based diet** tend to have a **lower body mass index**, and are **less likely to gain weight over time**[7, 8, 9].

If you are struggling to get daily physical exercise, **aim to start gently**. Even a **brisk 30 minute** walk each **day** can be **beneficial**.



The **"NHS Couch to 5k" App** has been used successfully by thousands of people and will gradually guide you to a **more active lifestyle.**

2 Eat plenty of fibre



28% of bowel cancer cases in the UK are **caused by eating too little fibre.**

Eating **plenty of fibre daily** can **reduce your risk of bowel cancer**[10].

Every **10g increase** in **whole grain fibre** consumed **daily** is associated with a **10% reduction** in **colon cancer**[11].

With modern eating habits our diets can easily fail to provide enough dietary fibre, especially if consuming **large amounts** of **animal-based** and **highly processed** foods.

Fibre intake can be increased by making sure that we eat plenty of:

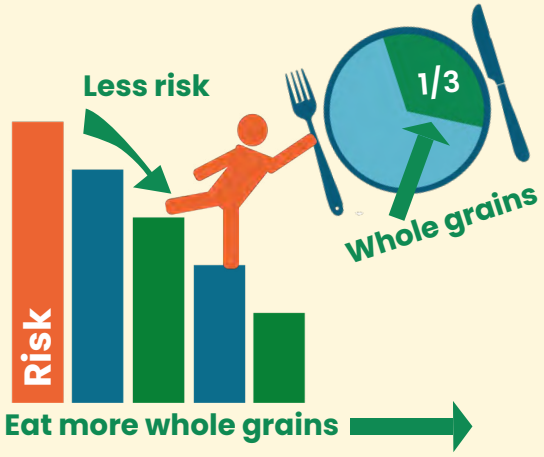


Bowel cancer

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Fibre continued:

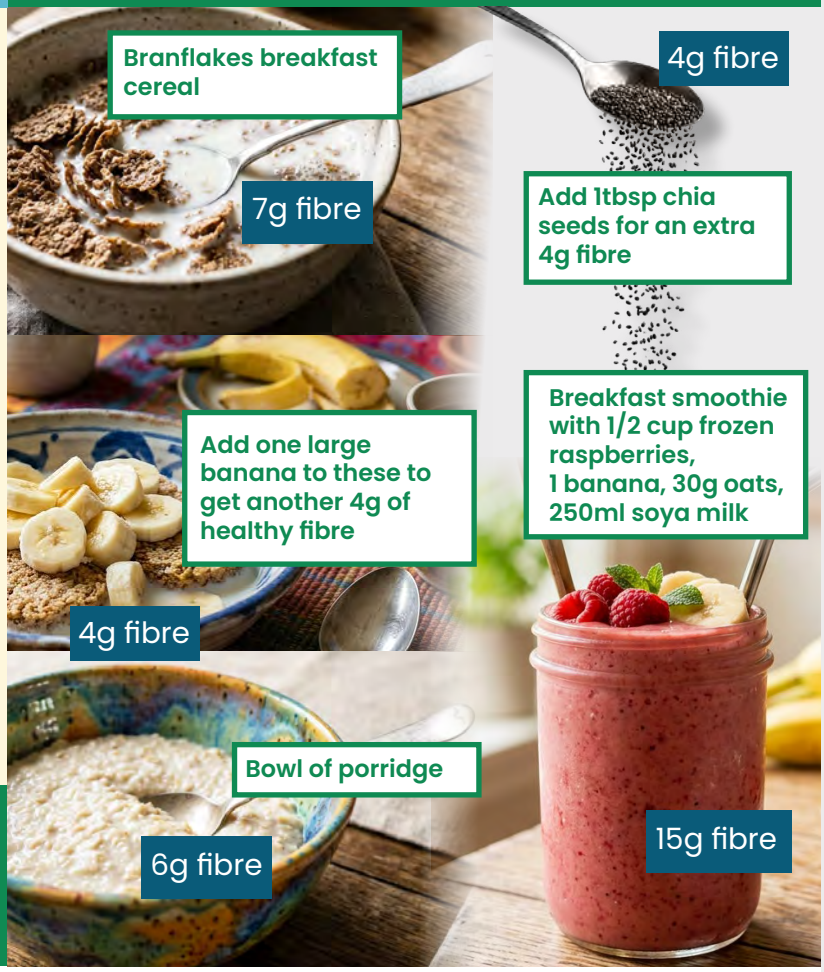
The **NHS Eatwell Guide** suggests that healthy **whole grains** should form more than **one-third** of the foods that we eat each day and it's estimated that colorectal cancer **risk decreases by 17%** for **each 90g/ day increase** of **whole grains**[12].



If you're **not used to eating much fibre**, make the **increase gradually** to allow your digestive system to adjust.

Aim to consume a **minimum** of **30g of fibre each day**.

A **fibre-rich breakfast** is a great start to the day:



3 Eat your beans and greens

A **higher intake** of **B vitamins** has been associated with a **reduced risk** of bowel cancer[13, 14, 15].



You can ensure that you are getting these benefits by eating your "**beans and greens**"; include plenty of **leafy green vegetables** and **beans** as part of your daily menu. Individuals consuming a plant-based diet should take a **regular B12 supplement**.

In patients who have had **colon polyps removed**, **bean consumption** may also **reduce the risk** of **new polyps** forming over time[16].





It's good news for individuals who like coffee!

The World Cancer Research Fund recommends including **coffee** as part of a **healthy diet for bowel cancer prevention**[17].

Bowel cancer

Steps to take to reduce the risk of bowel cancer

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4 Get enough calcium



Getting enough calcium, regardless of the source, is associated with a reduced risk of bowel cancer[18].

Increasing calcium intake to meet the **recommended daily intake** (700mg a day for adults) may help to **reduce the risk** of developing bowel cancer.

Good plant-based sources of calcium include:



Calcium-set tofu



Fortified plant-based dairy alternatives

Tahini





Almond butter



Other nuts and seeds







Green leafy veg such as kale, broccoli, bok choy, watercress and rocket

Tips to increase calcium intake:

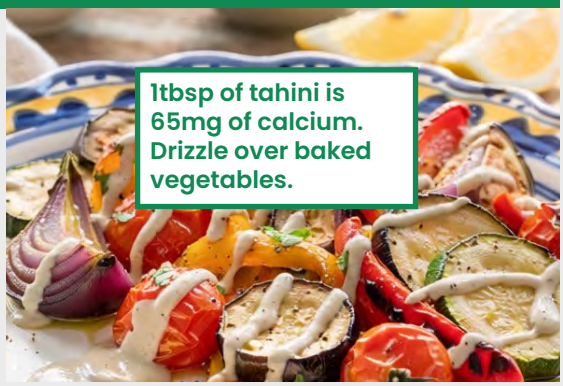


Always ensure plant-based dairy alternatives are fortified, aim for a minimum 400mls daily.

While research shows that taking **calcium supplements** can help **reduce bowel cancer risk**, it is **not recommended** to rely on supplements for cancer prevention.



200mls soya drink in porridge or on fortified breakfast cereal plus 80g calcium set-tofu will provide approximately 520-650mg calcium.



1tbsp of tahini is 65mg of calcium. Drizzle over baked vegetables.



Try a sliced apple drizzled with 30g almond butter – total 120g calcium.

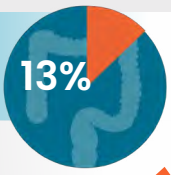
Bowel cancer

Steps to take to reduce the risk of bowel cancer

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5 Avoid red meat and processed meat



Cancer Research UK estimates that 13% of bowel cancer cases in the UK are caused by eating processed meats alone[,3,4]

Eating just **50 grams** of **processed meat daily** (equivalent to one sausage) **increases your risk** of bowel cancer by about **18%**.



Eating **100g red meat every day** (equivalent to less than a burger a day) **increases your risk** of bowel cancer by about **17%**[19].

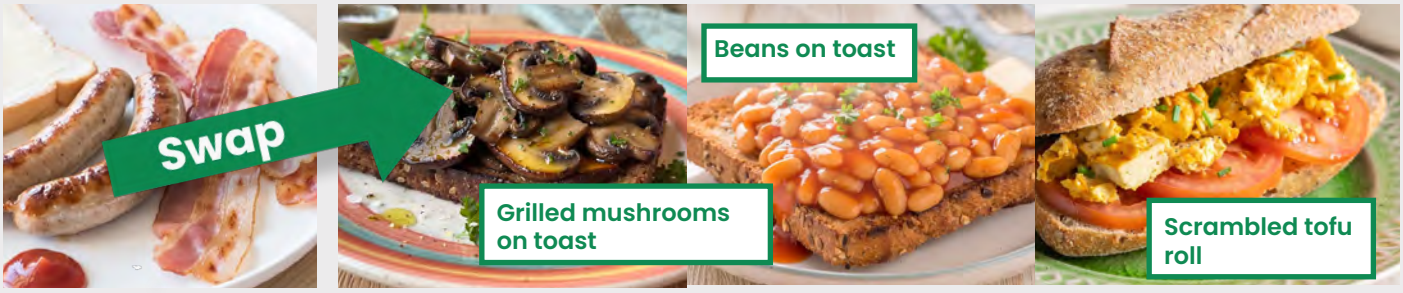


Easy ways to cut down on red and processed meat include:

Replace mince from cows with **Quorn** or **soya mince**, **lentils**, or **beans** in recipes such as **bolognaise** and **chilli con carne**



Swap sausages and bacon for **plant-based alternatives** for **breakfast**



Use **pulses** like **chickpeas** or **lentils** in **curries**, **stews**, and **salads**



Reduce portion sizes of **red meat** and **bulk out dishes** with **vegetables**, **beans**, or **whole grains**

A plant-based diet that **excludes** or minimises **animal-based products** is associated with a **21-24% risk reduction** of colorectal cancer[20, 21].

Bowel cancer

Steps to take to reduce the risk of bowel cancer

PLANT-BASED Health Professionals UK

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6 Don't smoke

7% of bowel cancer cases in the UK are **caused by smoking**[3].



Large medical studies show that **smokers** have an **14-25% increased risk** of developing colon cancer[22, 23].

This is due to the **multiple cancer-causing chemicals** found in **cigarette smoke**. The **longer** you smoke, the **larger the risk**.

It is never too late to benefit from quitting cigarettes.

You can **learn more** about getting help to **quit** by speaking to your **GP or pharmacist**. You can get free help to stop smoking at www.nhs.uk/Livewell

7 Avoid alcohol



In the UK, about **6%** of colon cancer cases are caused by **alcohol consumption**[3].

When it comes to cancer prevention, there is **no safe limit for alcohol**. You can learn more about keeping your alcohol use to a sensible minimum at www.nhs.uk/Livewell.

8 Bowel cancer screening programme



Most countries offer **screening tests** to healthy individuals to look for **signs of pre-cancerous bowel polyps**. If you live in the UK there is **one bowel cancer screening programme** that you should take part in.

The Bowel Cancer Screening Programme (BCSP)

The NHS BCSP aims to **detect bowel cancer at an early stage** in people with **no symptoms**. It can also **detect and remove pre-cancerous polyps**, therefore helping to **reduce the risk** of cancer **developing in the future**. The **BCSP** offers screening **every two years** to all men and women **aged 50-74**.

When you enter this age group you will **automatically be invited** by letter to **send in a stool sample**. The sample is **tested** for any **signs** that you may already have a polyp or bowel cancer. **If the stool test is positive you will be offered a colonoscopy** [24].

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