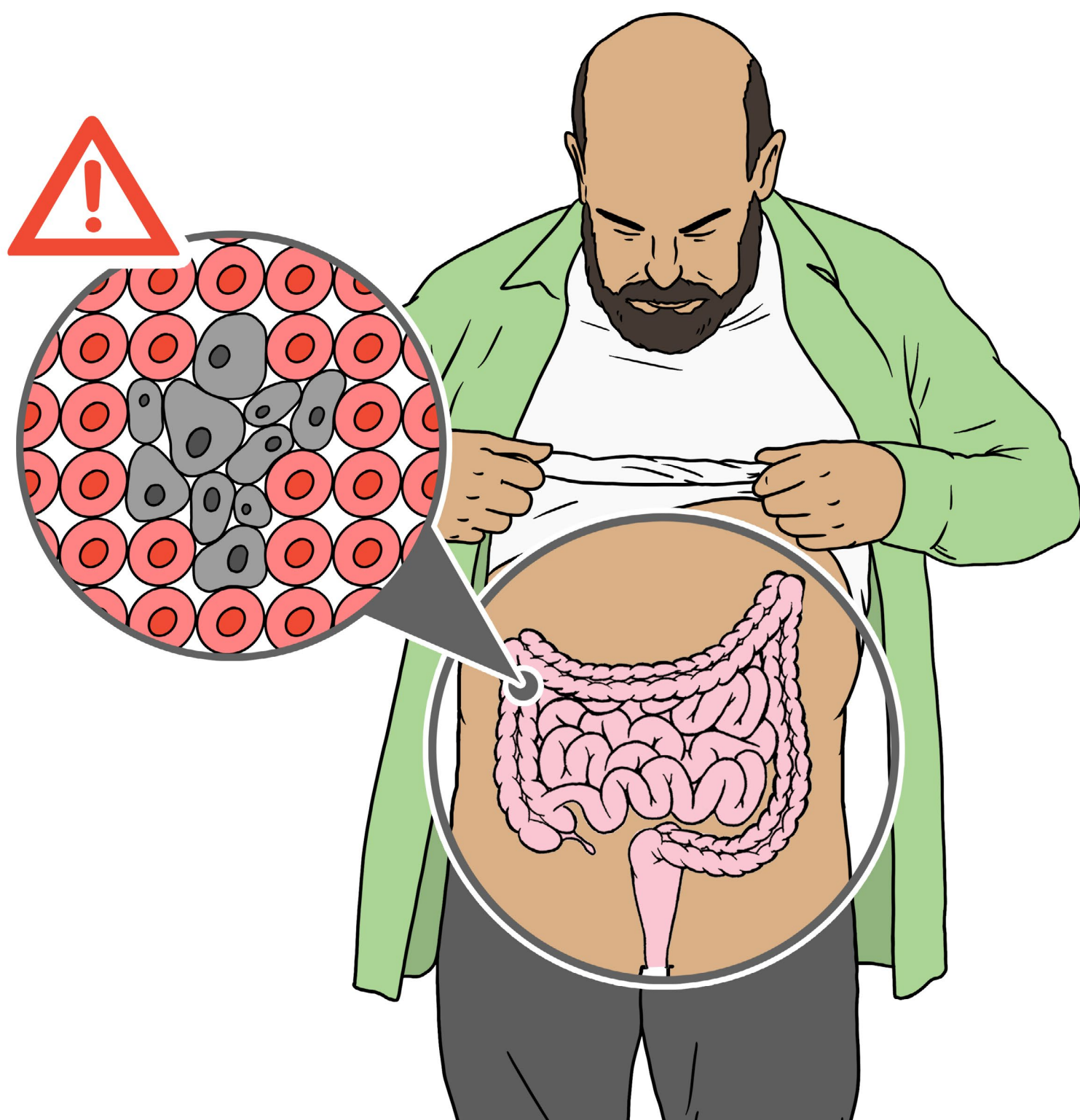


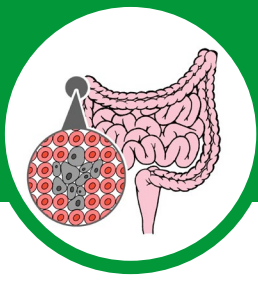
In partnership with

MACMILLAN
CANCER SUPPORT

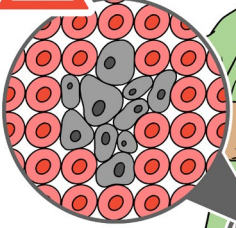
easy
read

Bowel cancer

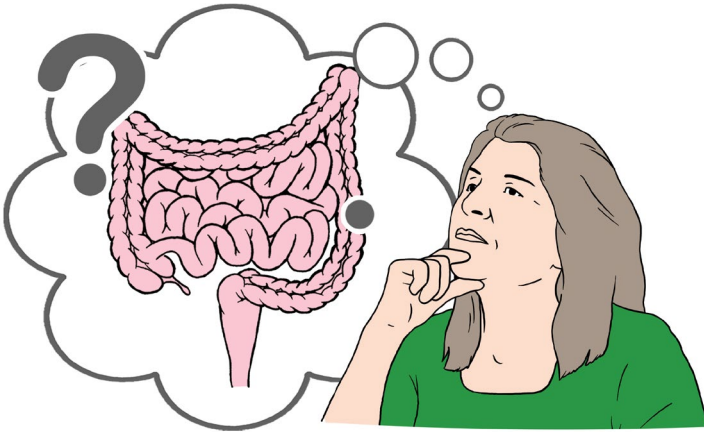




About this easy read booklet



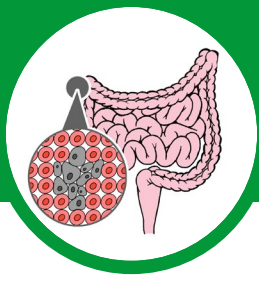
This booklet is about bowel cancer.



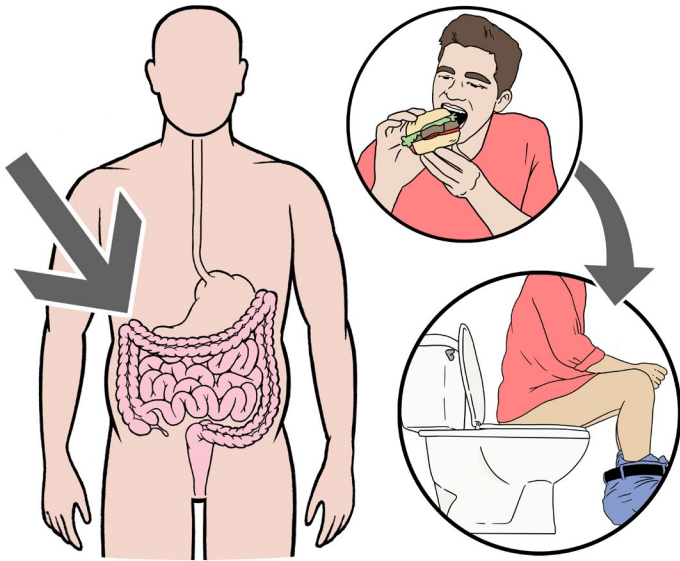
You can learn about what bowel cancer is and how it is treated.



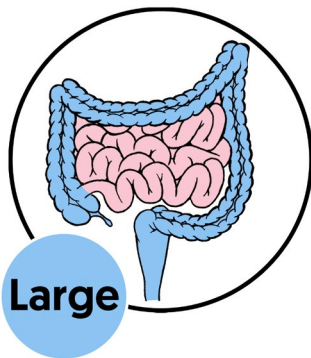
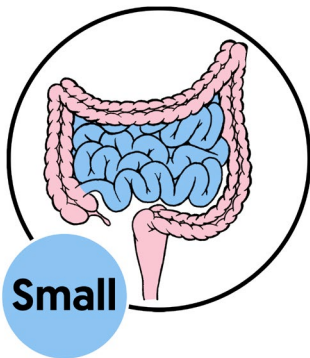
If you are worried about your health, you should talk to a doctor or nurse.



The bowel



The bowel is part of your **digestive system**. It helps your body take in nutrients and break down food into poo.



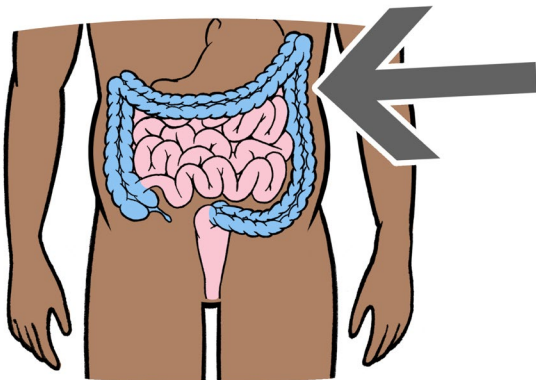
The bowel has 2 parts:

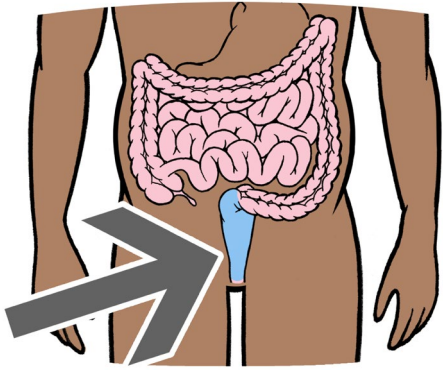
- **small bowel**
- **large bowel.**

The large bowel has 3 parts:

- **Colon**

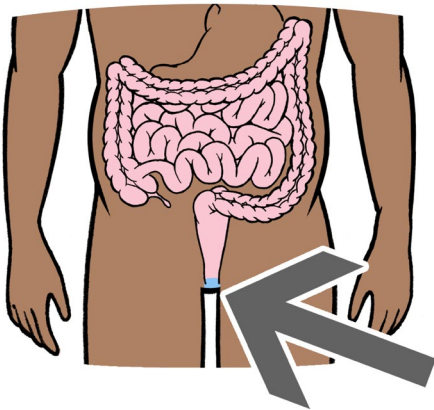
This is the main part of the large bowel.





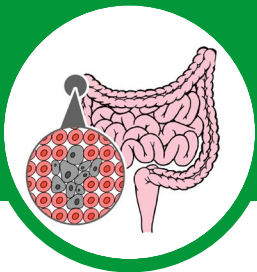
- **Rectum**

This is sometimes called your back passage.

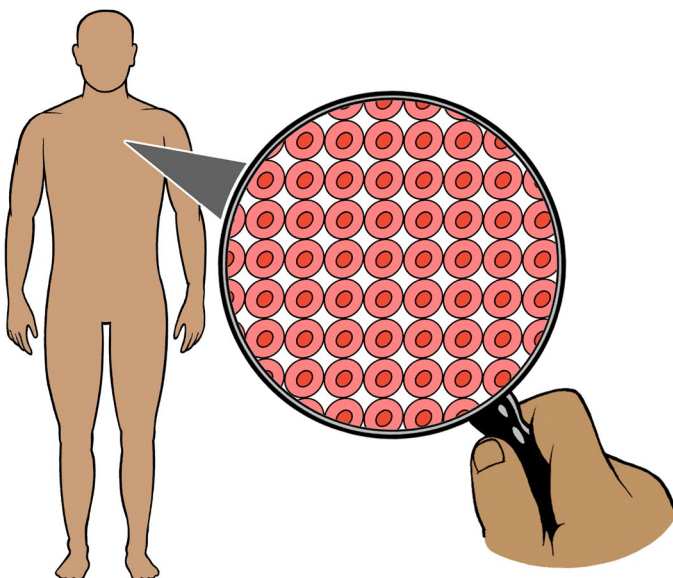


- **Anus**

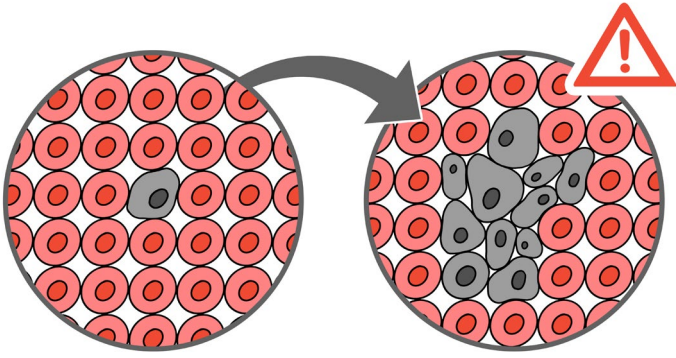
This is where you pass poo out of your body.



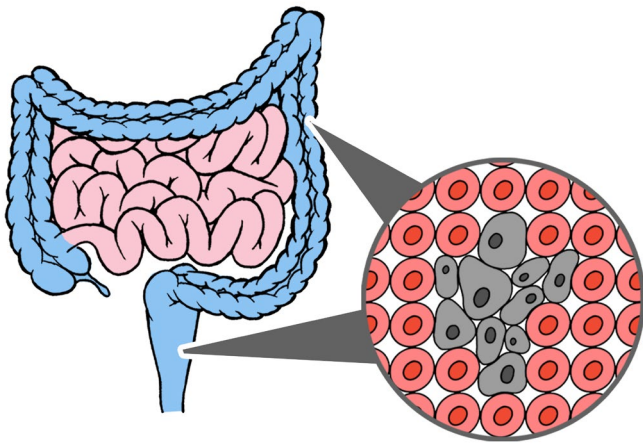
Bowel cancer



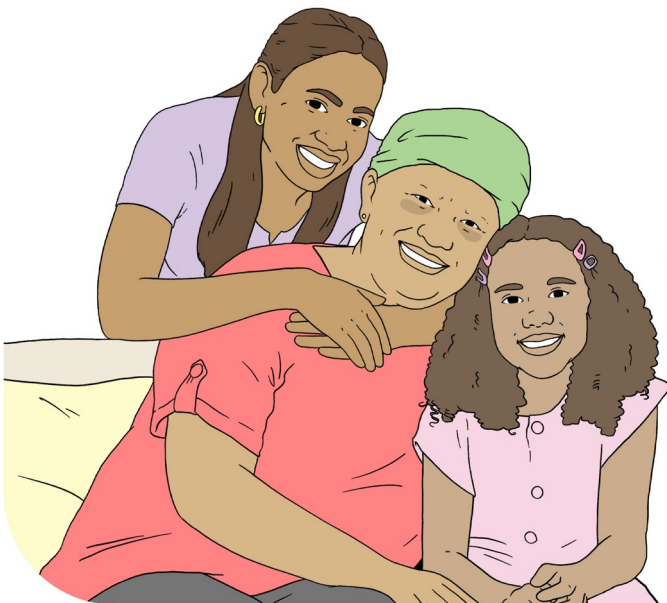
Your body is made of tiny pieces called **cells**.



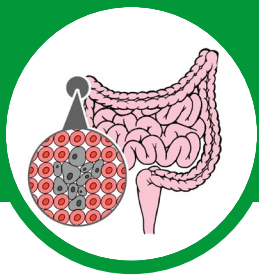
Sometimes these cells go wrong. They can grow into a lump called a **tumour**.



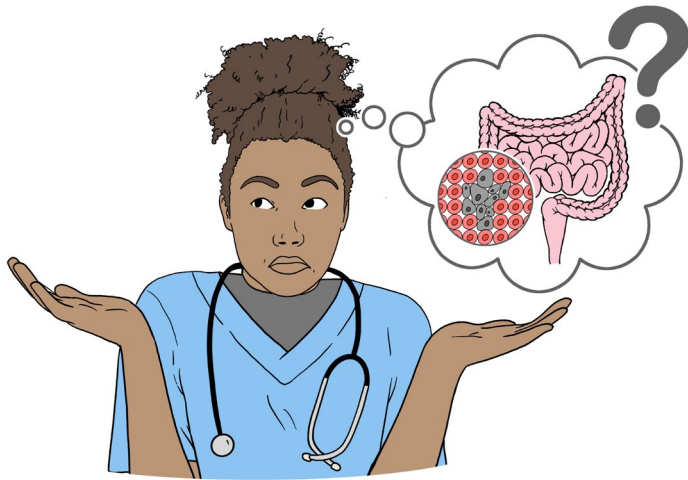
When cancer starts in the colon or rectum it is **bowel cancer**. It is also called **colorectal cancer**.



You can not catch cancer from someone else. And you can not give it to anyone.



Risks of bowel cancer

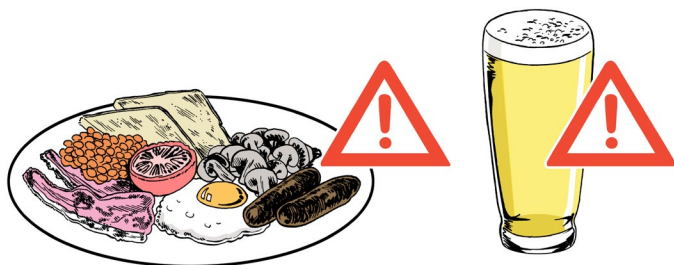


Doctors do not know what causes bowel cancer. There are things that can mean you are more likely to get it. These are called **risk factors**.

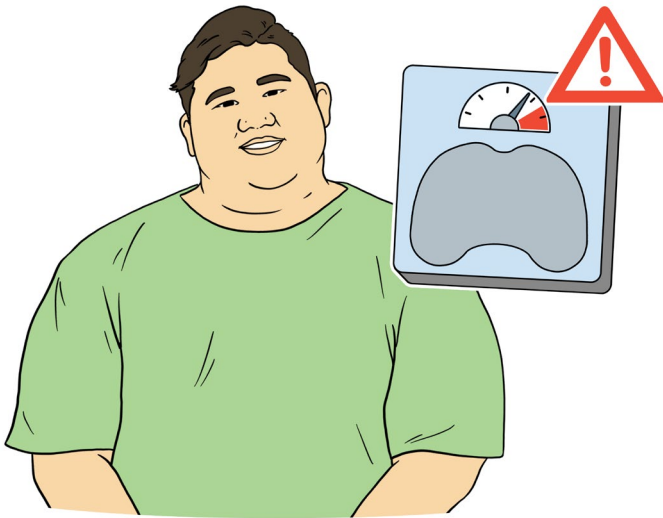


Risk factors include things like:

- getting older



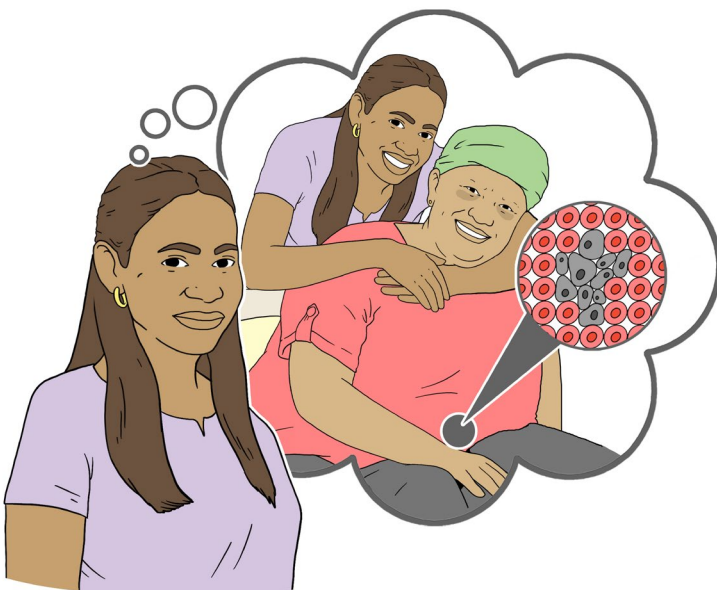
- your diet



- being overweight or not getting enough exercise



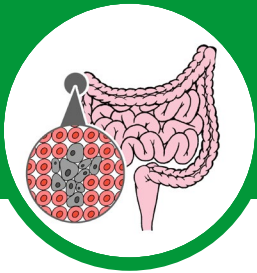
- having bowel conditions like ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease



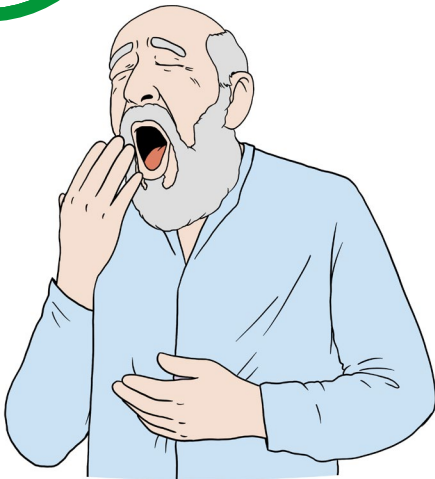
- having people in your family like a parent, brother or sister who have had bowel cancer.



Having risk factors does not mean you will get bowel cancer. And sometimes people with no risk factors can get it.



Signs and symptoms



Symptoms are signs in your body that tell you something is wrong, like feeling tired all the time.



Symptoms of bowel cancer might be:

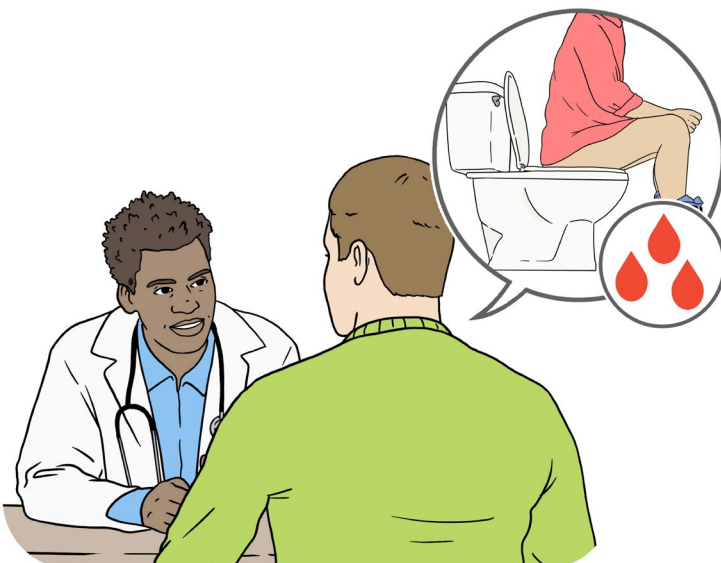
- blood in your poo or bleeding from your bottom



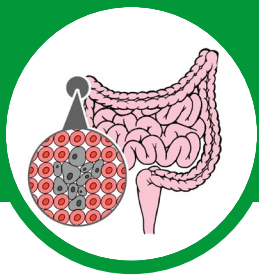
- a change in how you usually poo, like having runny poo or finding it hard to poo



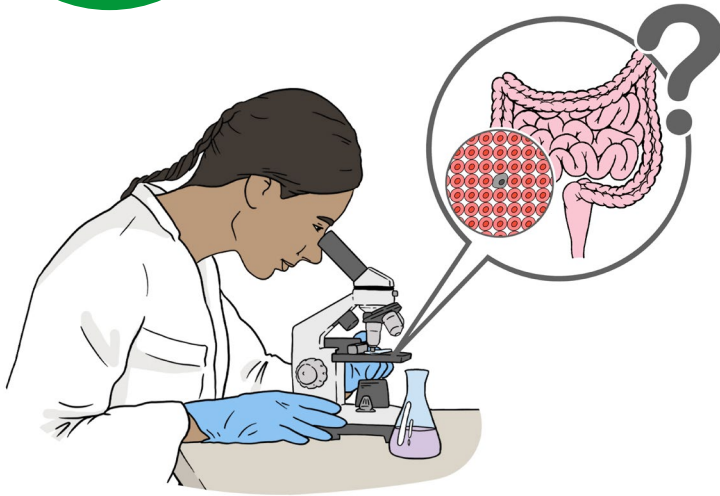
- a sore tummy.



These symptoms might be caused by bowel cancer or other things. You should get them checked by your doctor.



Tests for bowel cancer



You may be offered **bowel screening**. This means having tests to look for very early signs of cancer. You have screenings even if you feel well.



If you are feeling unwell, you might be sent to the hospital for some tests to find out if you have bowel cancer.

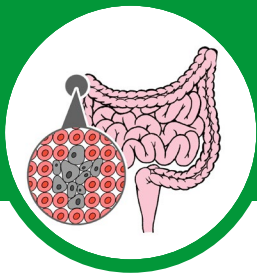


If you have bowel cancer, the tests will help your doctor know if the cancer is in the colon or the rectum, and help them choose the best treatment.

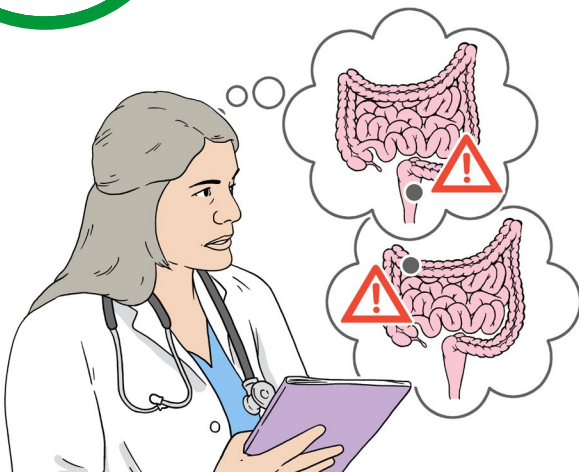


You can learn more about these tests from other Macmillan booklets.

See page 35.



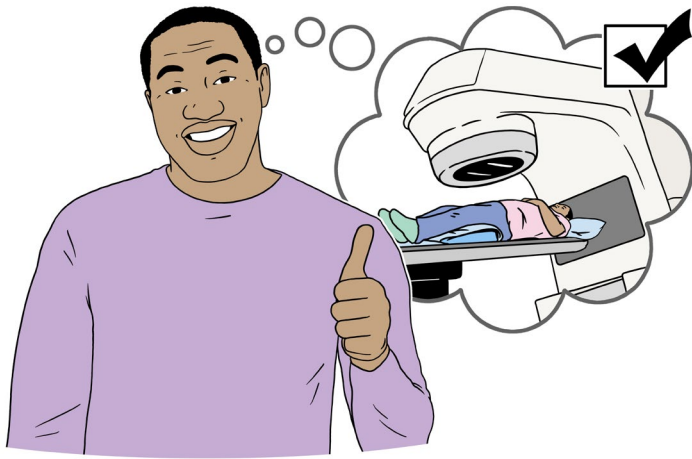
Treatment for bowel cancer



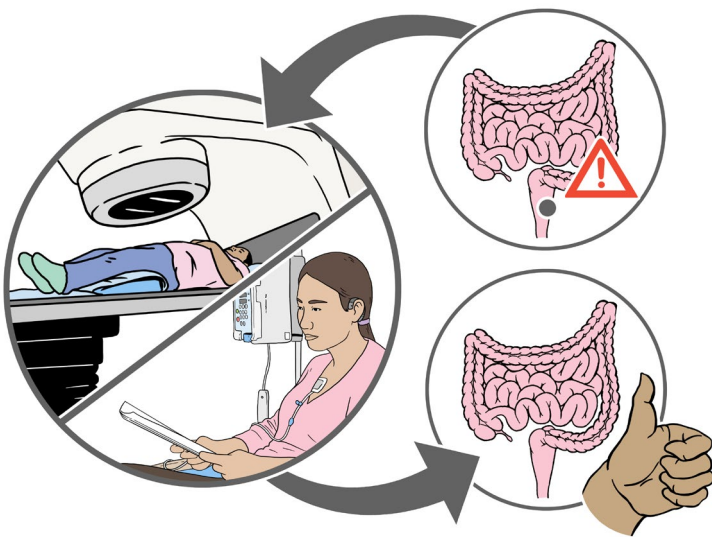
There are different treatments for bowel cancer. Your doctor will choose your treatment based on what type of bowel cancer you have.



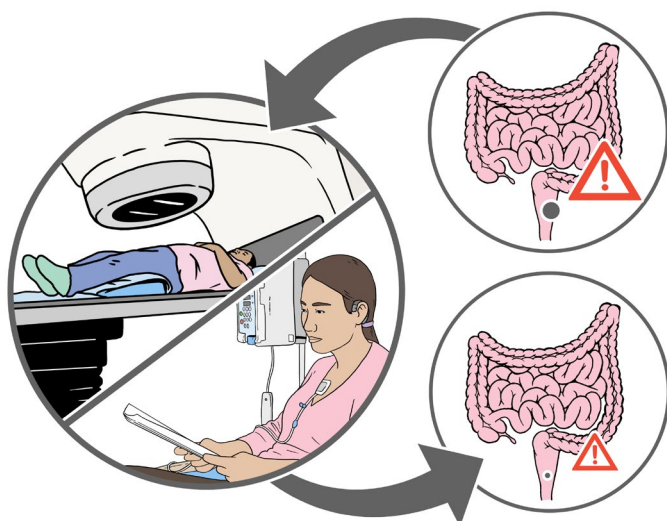
Your doctor will tell you why they think this treatment is best. They will answer any questions you have.



Before you have treatment, your doctor must make sure that you understand why you are having it, and that you feel OK having the treatment.



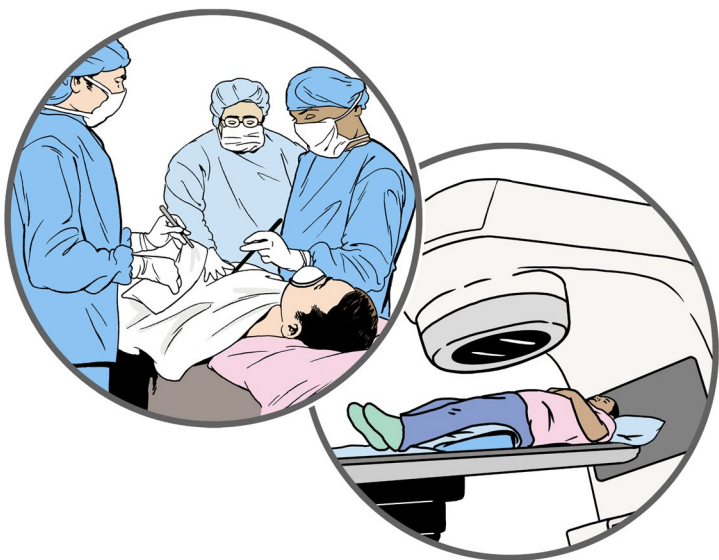
Sometimes treatment can get rid of the bowel cancer.



Sometimes treatment will not get rid of the bowel cancer but will help you live longer and help you feel better.



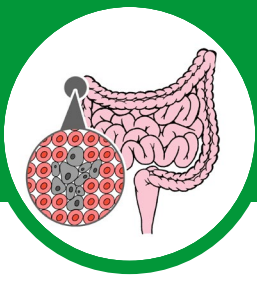
Treatments are given in a hospital or clinic.



There are different treatments for bowel cancer. You might have more than 1 treatment.



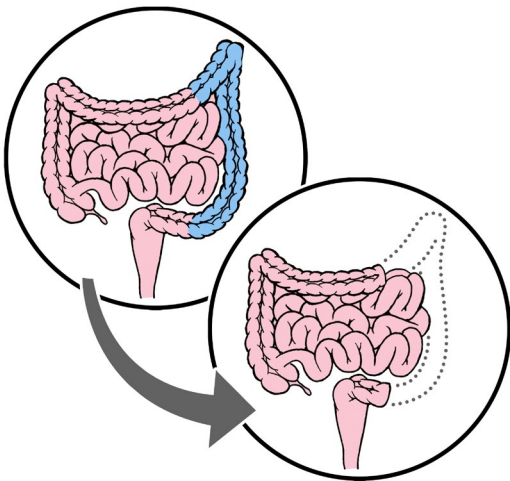
You might have **surgery**, **radiotherapy** or **anti-cancer drugs**. The next 3 parts of this booklet will explain what these treatments are.



Surgery



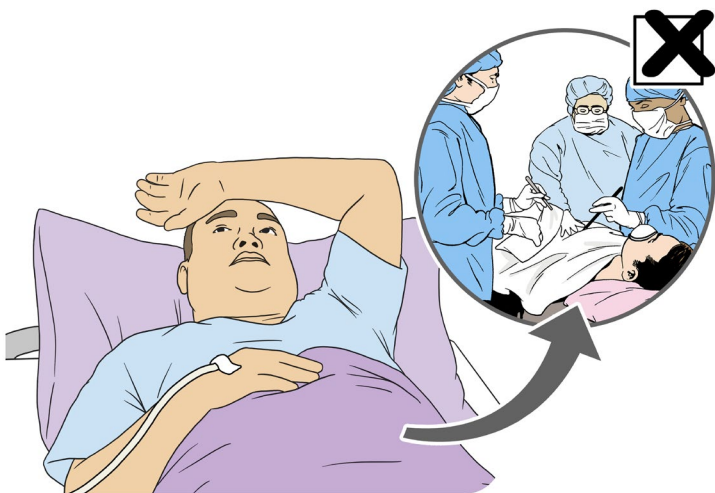
Surgery means having an operation. An **operation** is when a doctor removes, replaces or fixes something inside your body.



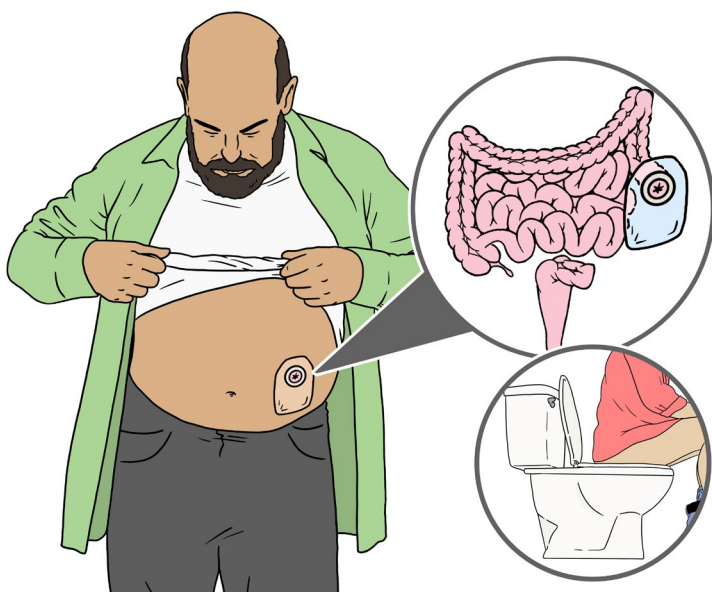
Surgery is the main treatment for bowel cancer. Most people have an operation to remove the part of the bowel where the cancer is.



Before surgery, your doctor may want you to have some tests. This is to make sure surgery is safe for you.



You might not be able to have surgery if you have other health problems.

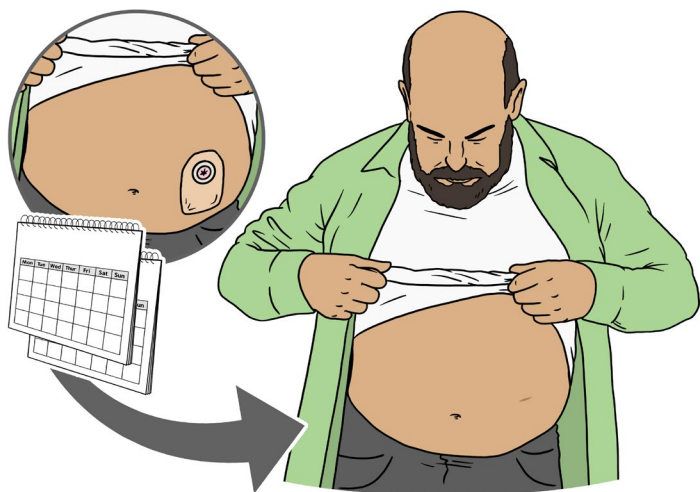


After part of the bowel is removed some people need to have a **stoma**.

A **stoma** is a small opening in the tummy where poo comes out into a bag.



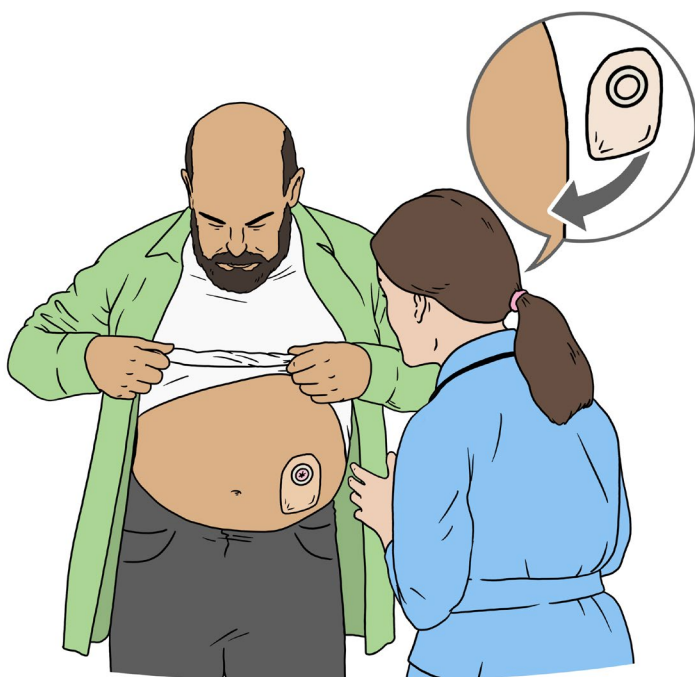
Your doctor can tell you if you may need a stoma and how long you may have it for.



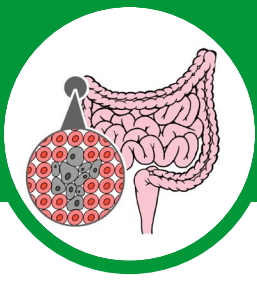
Some people have a stoma for a few months and then have another surgery to remove it.



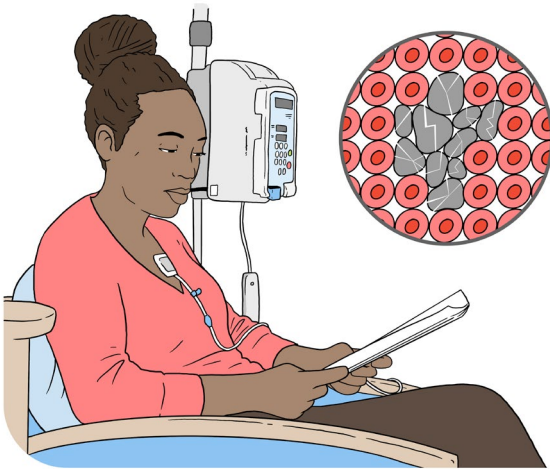
Other people have a stoma for the rest of their life.



A specialist nurse called a **stoma nurse** will teach you how to care for your stoma. This is so you can manage it on your own.

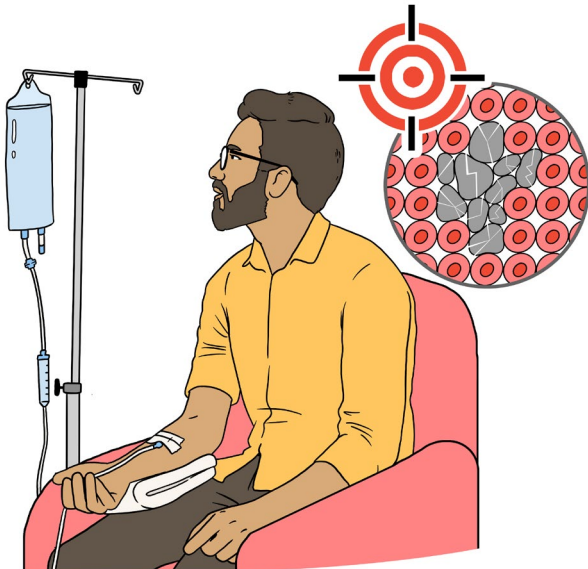


Anti-cancer drugs

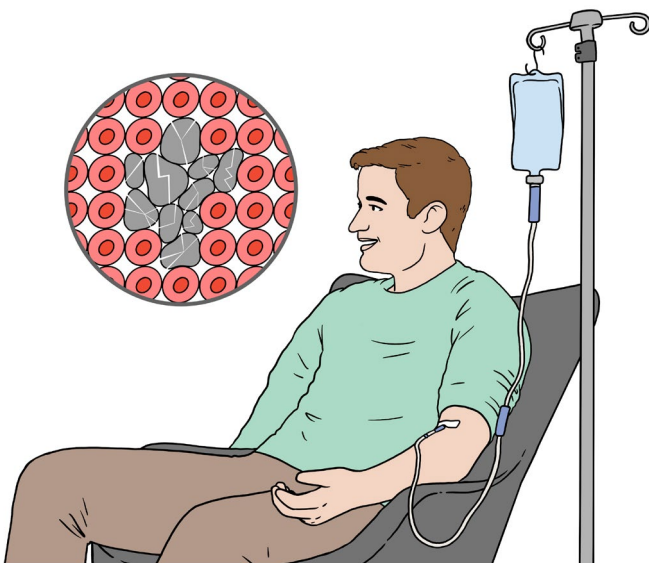


There are different types of anti-cancer drugs:

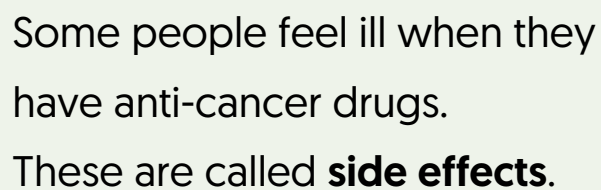
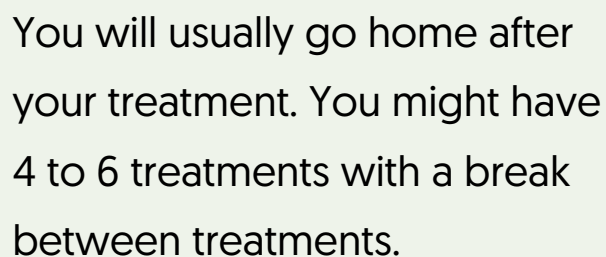
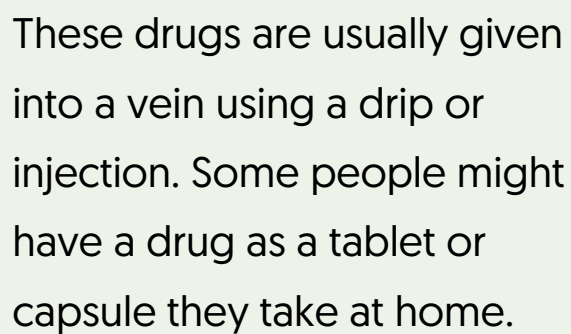
- **Chemotherapy** drugs are used to destroy cancer cells.

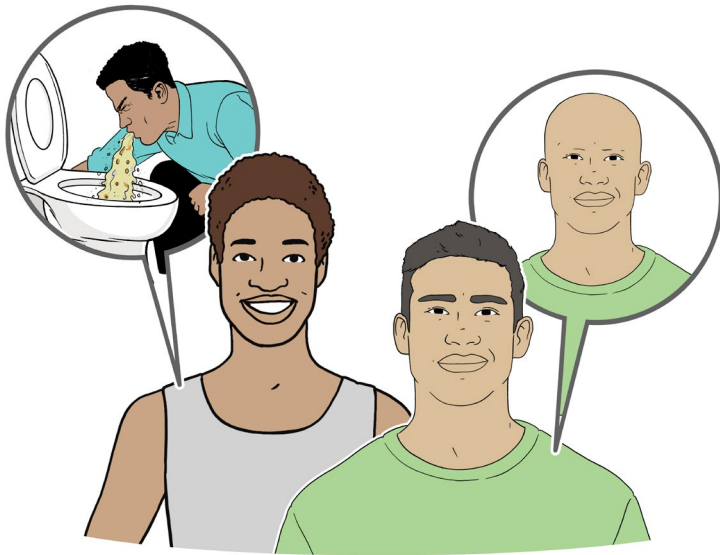


- **Targeted therapy** drugs target and destroy cancer cells.



- **Immunotherapy** drugs help your body to destroy cancer cells.





Different people might have different side effects. It can depend what drug you have. You may:



- feel tired, or have a high temperature



- feel sick or have diarrhoea



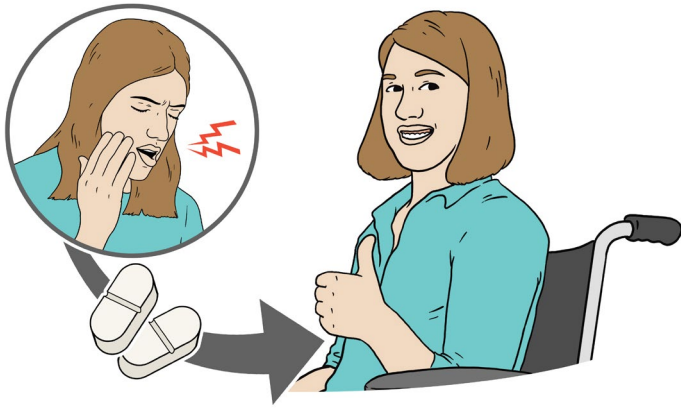
- have a sore mouth



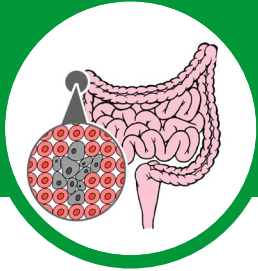
- have skin rashes or lose your hair.



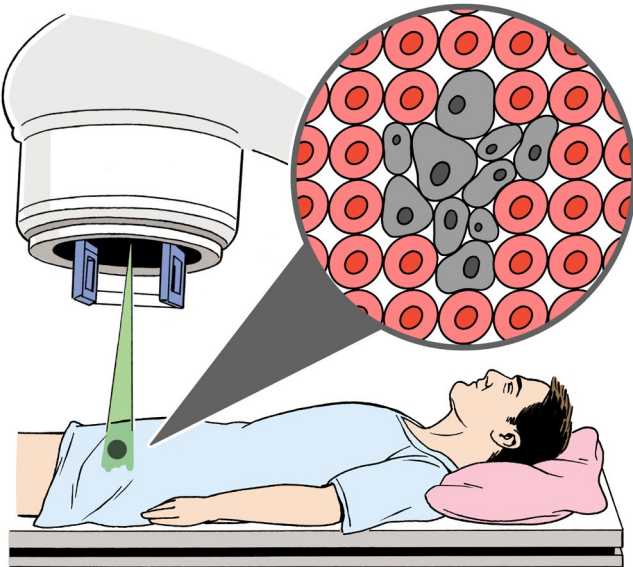
If you have side effects, or you are worried, it is important to talk to your healthcare team.



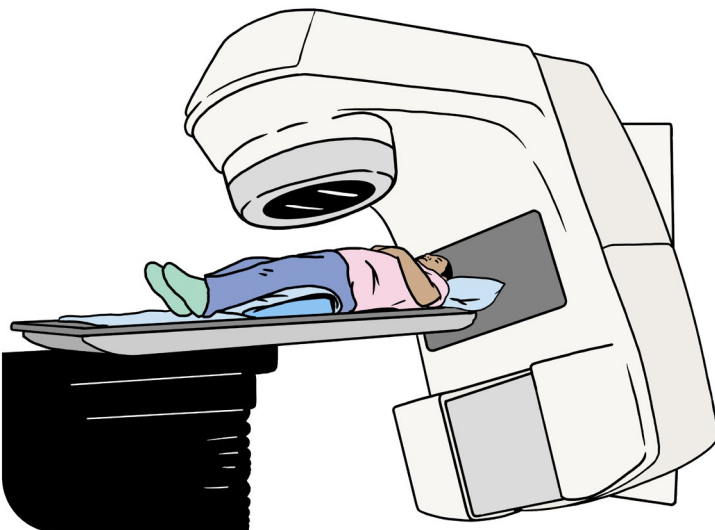
They can give you medicines to make you feel better. Many side effects get better over time.



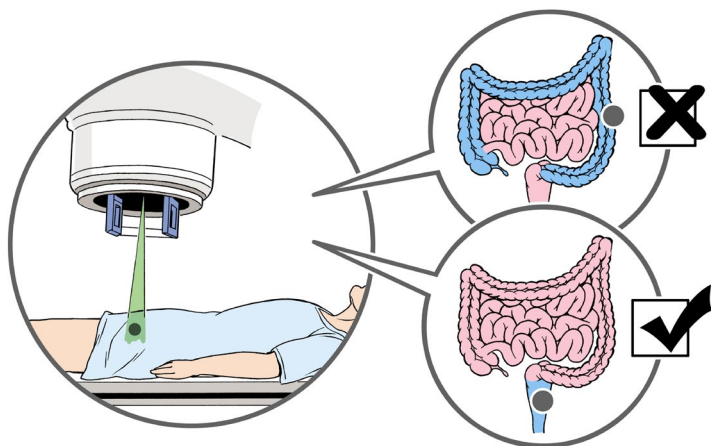
Radiotherapy



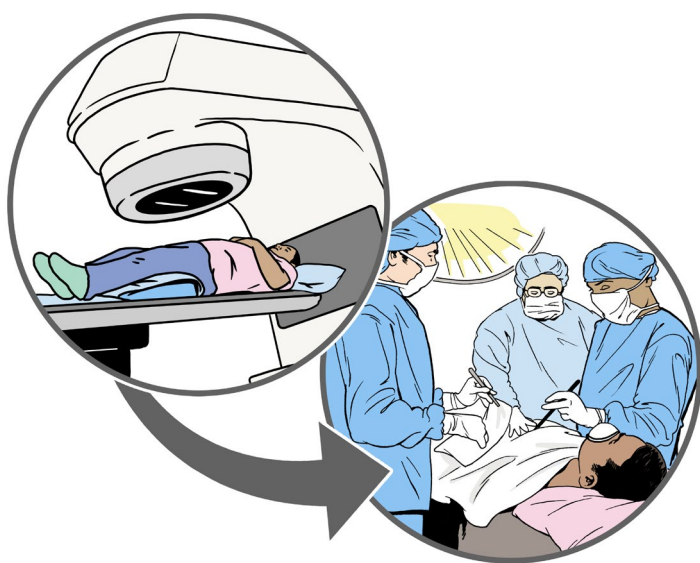
Radiotherapy uses high energy rays to destroy cancer cells. These rays are called **radiation**.



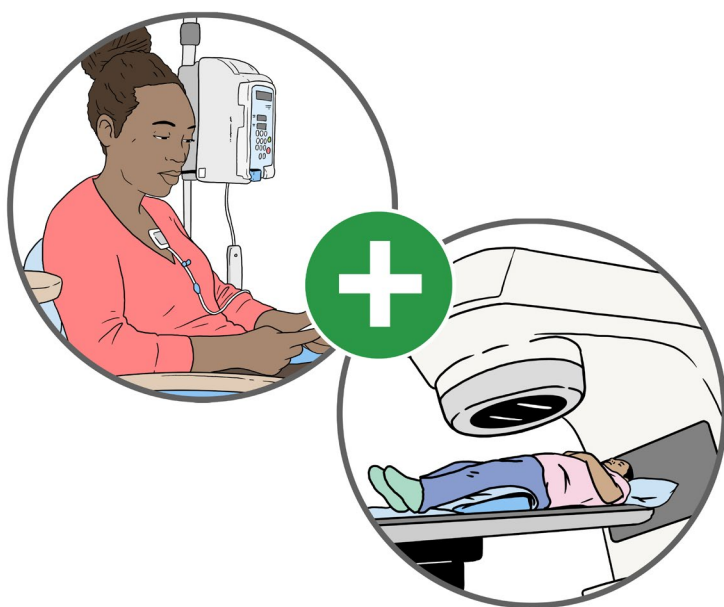
It is usually given by a machine outside the body.



Radiotherapy is used for **rectal** cancer, but not for colon cancer. **Rectal** cancer is cancer in the rectum.



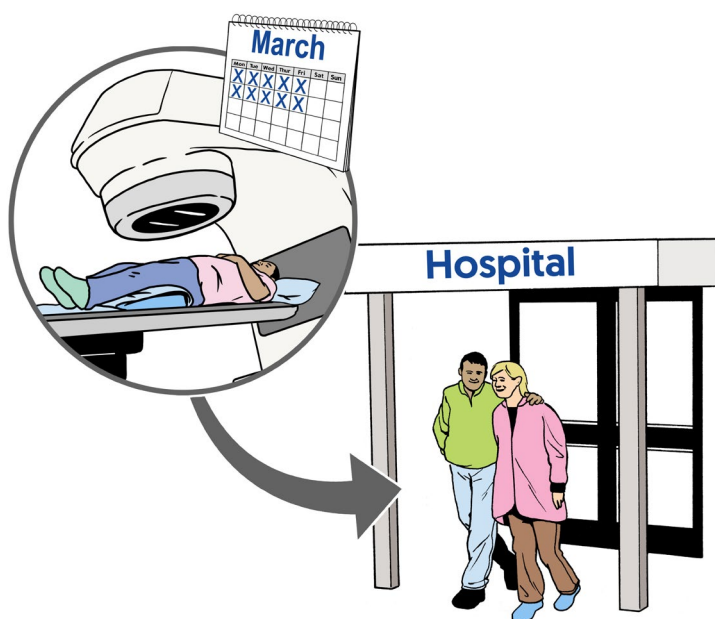
You may have radiotherapy before surgery to make the rectal cancer smaller.



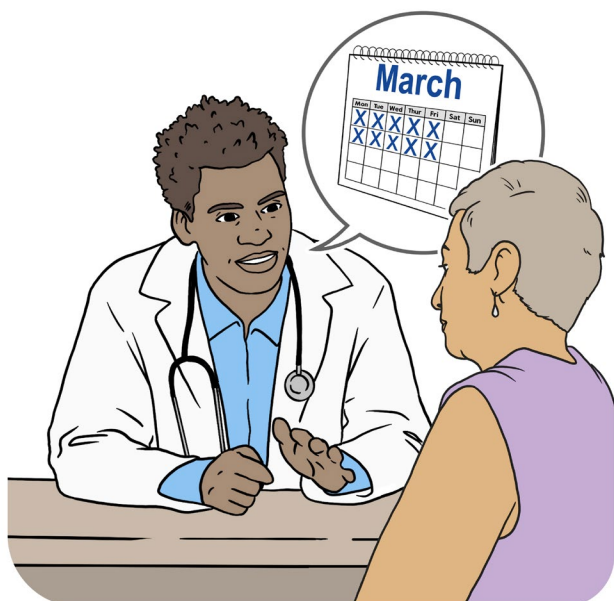
You might have radiotherapy at the same time as chemotherapy. This is called **chemoradiation**.



Your doctor will tell you how you will have your radiotherapy and explain the side effects you might have.



You will usually have a short radiotherapy treatment every day, but not at the weekend. You usually go home after your treatment each day.

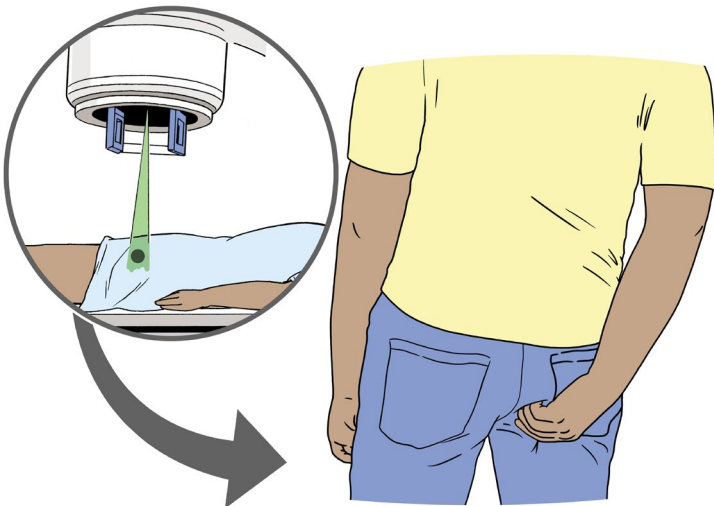


Your doctor will tell you how many treatments you will have. It is different for every person.

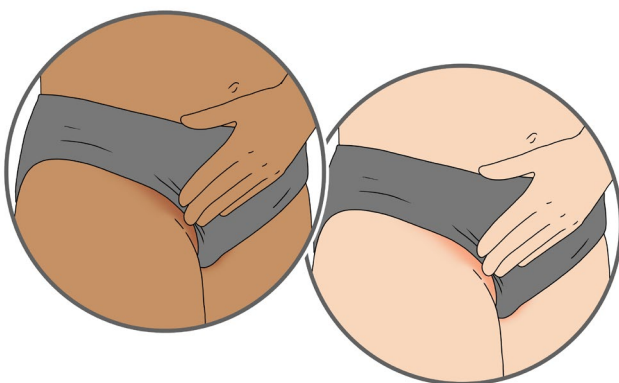


Radiotherapy can cause side effects that make you feel unwell, like:

- Feeling tired.



- Itchy or sore skin in the area you get your radiotherapy.



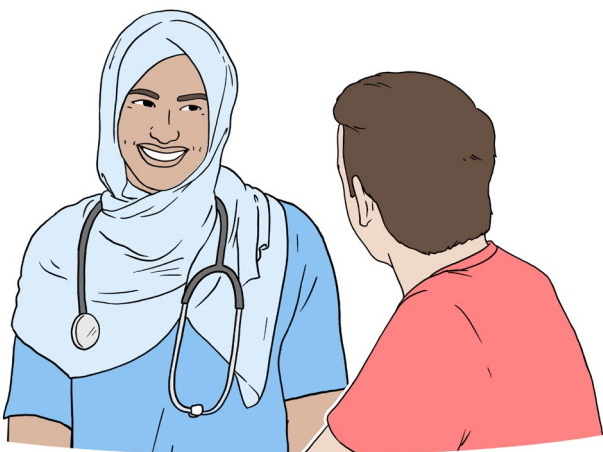
- A change in skin colour in the area your get your radiotherapy. Black or brown skin may become darker than the skin around it. White skin may become red.



- You may have diarrhoea, cramps, or pain when you poo.



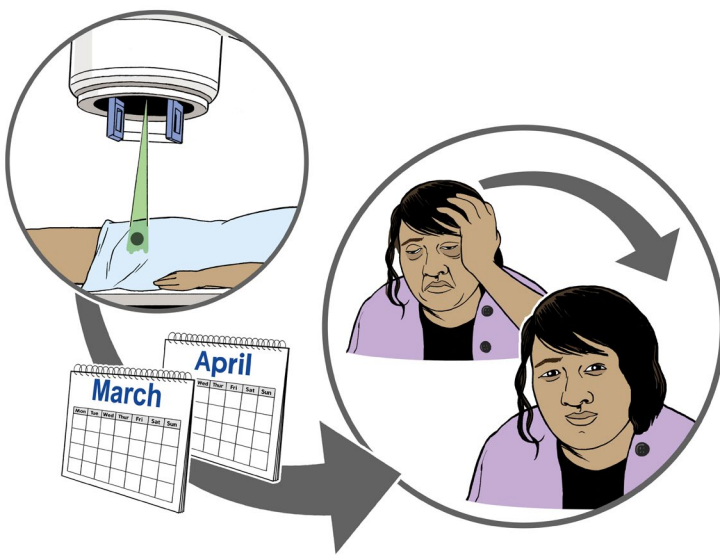
- You may need to pee more often, or have wind.



Talk to your radiotherapy team about any side effects you have.



There are often things that can help, for example tablets to control diarrhoea.

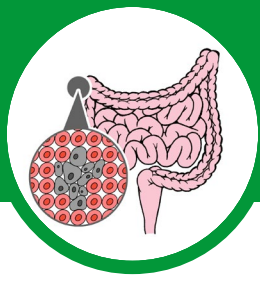


Most side effects get better a few weeks after you stop radiotherapy.

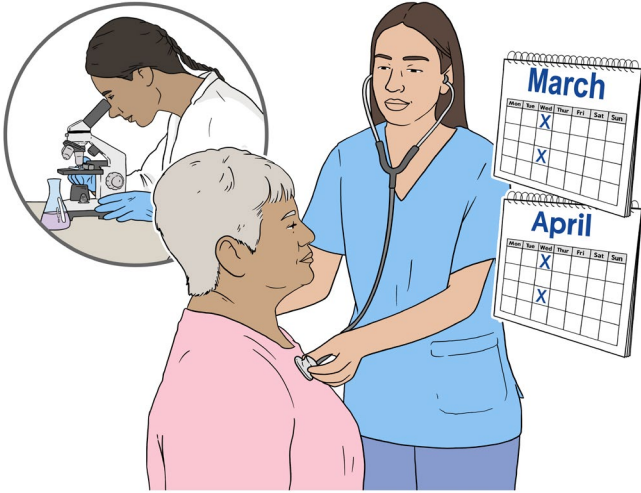


You can learn more about treatments for cancer and their side effects from other Macmillan booklets.

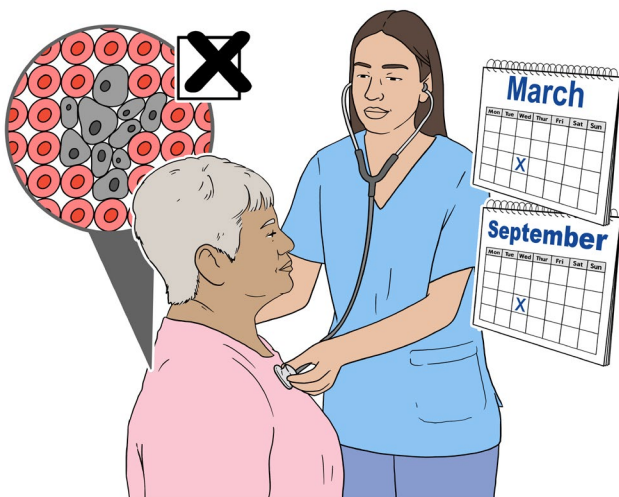
See page 37.



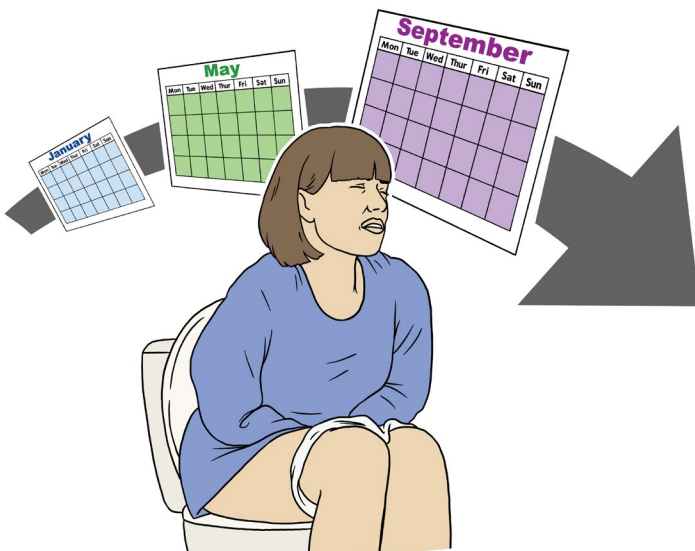
After treatment



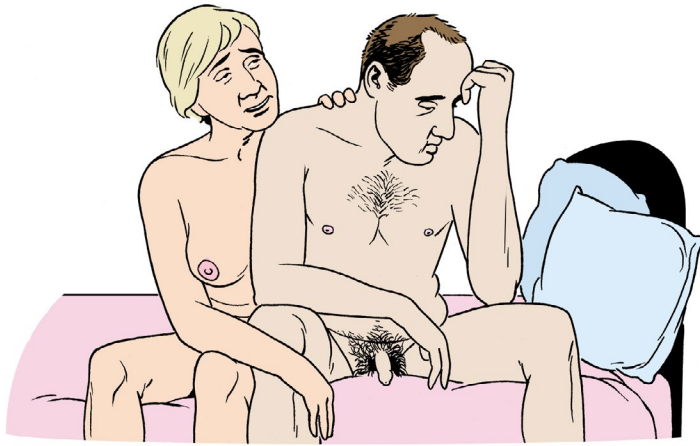
After your treatment has finished, you will have check ups and tests. At first you will have check ups and tests often.



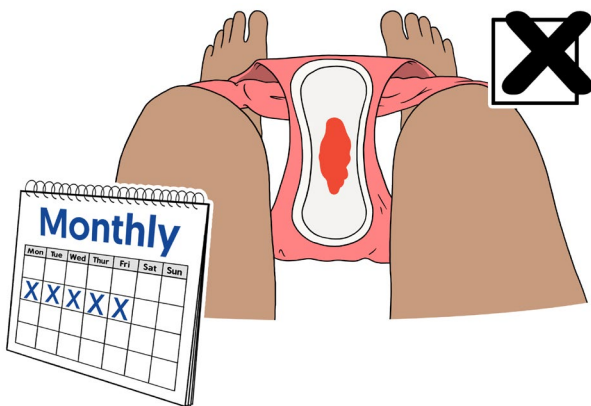
If the treatment has got rid of the cancer, you will have check ups less often.



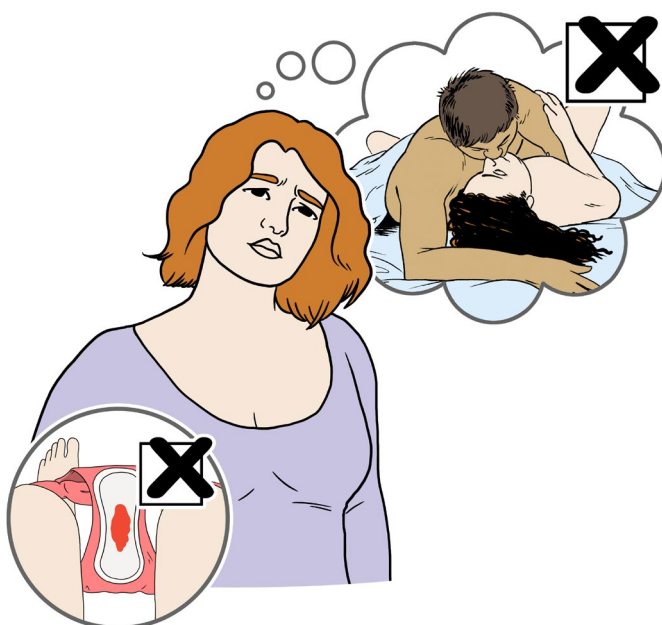
After treatment, your bowel may work differently for a while. Some side effects, like diarrhoea, might continue after treatment or never go away completely.



Radiotherapy or surgery can affect your sex life. If you have a penis you might find it difficult to get or keep an erection.



If you have **periods**, radiotherapy or chemotherapy might cause them to stop. **Periods** are when you bleed from your vagina each month.



You may go through the **menopause** earlier. This is when your periods stop forever. This can make you less interested in sex and have a dry vagina.



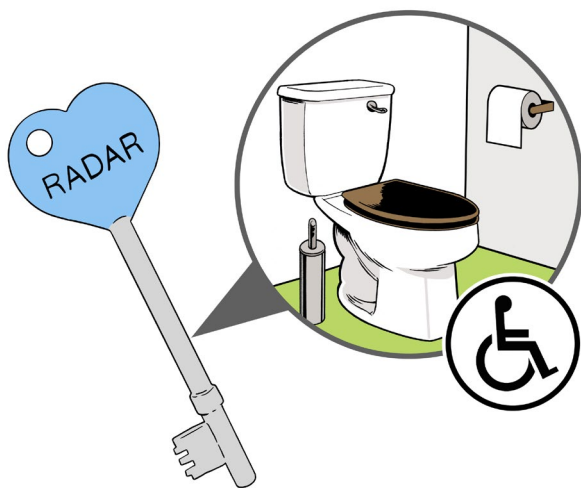
Always tell your doctor or nurse if you have any side effects that do not get better, or you get new side effects. There are usually things they can do to help.



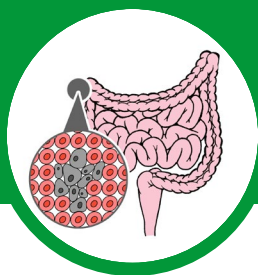
You can carry a **Macmillan toilet card**. It tells people that you might need to use a toilet urgently.



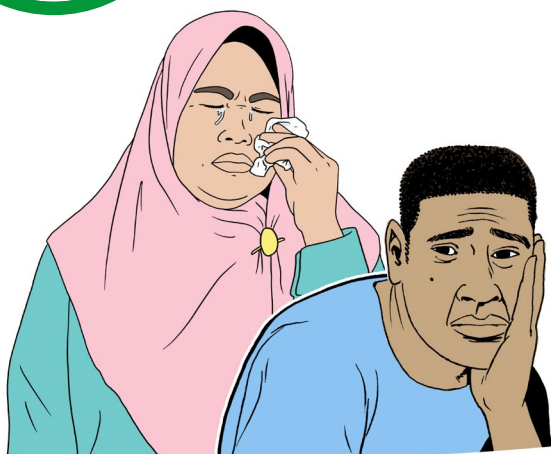
You can show it in places like shops, offices and cafes. It may not work everywhere.



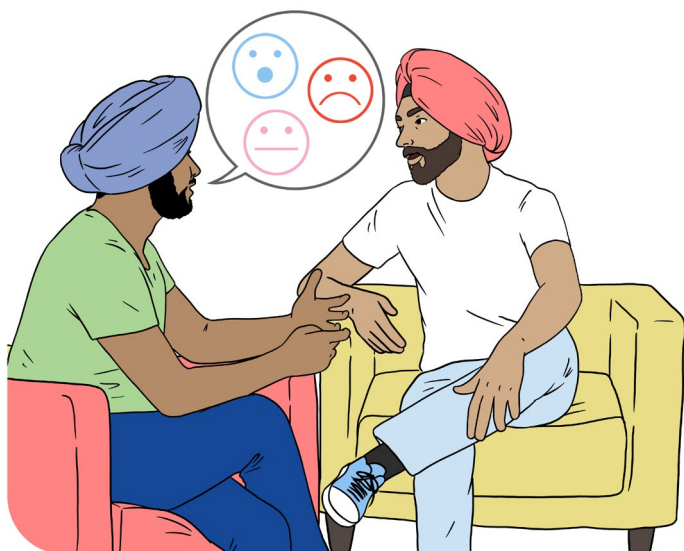
You can also use disabled toilets. Some are locked but you can buy a key from **Disability Rights UK**, this is called a **Radar key**.



Your feelings



You might have lots of feelings when you have bowel cancer. It is normal to have different feelings. You might feel sad, worried, or angry.

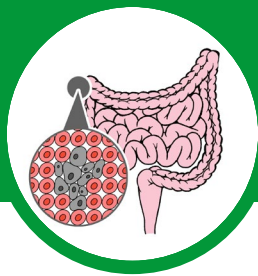


It is important to talk to someone about how you feel. They can help you get the support you need.



Macmillan's easy read booklet called **Talking about cancer and your feelings** might help you to talk about your feelings.

See page 37.



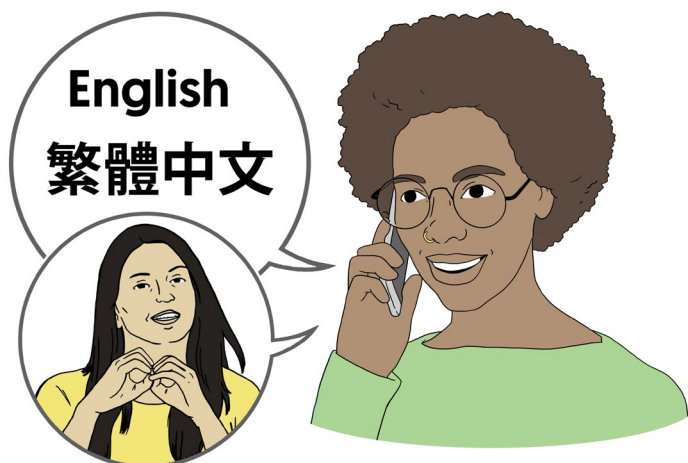
How Macmillan can help you



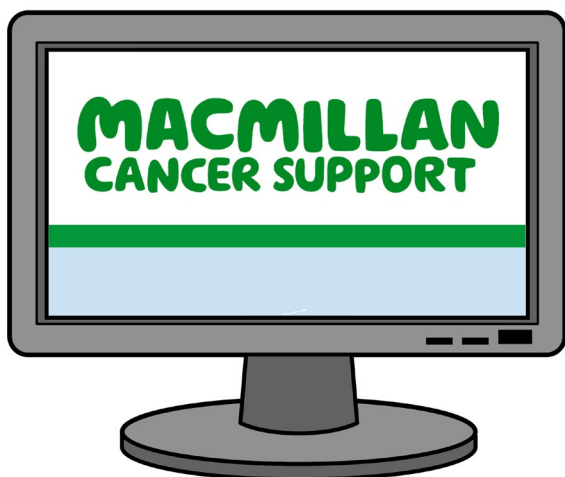
You can get support from:

The Macmillan Support Line

Call **0808 808 00 00** 7 days a week, 8am to 8pm.

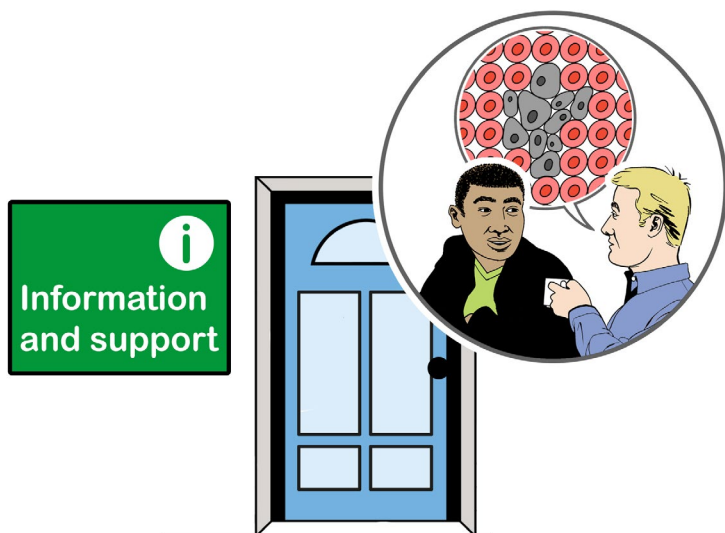


You can speak to us in your language, including British Sign Language (BSL). Just tell us what you need when you start the call.



The Macmillan website

Visit **macmillan.org.uk** for information about cancer. You can also use our web chat to ask questions at **macmillan.org.uk/talktous**



Information centres

You can talk to a cancer support specialist and get written information. Find your nearest centre at

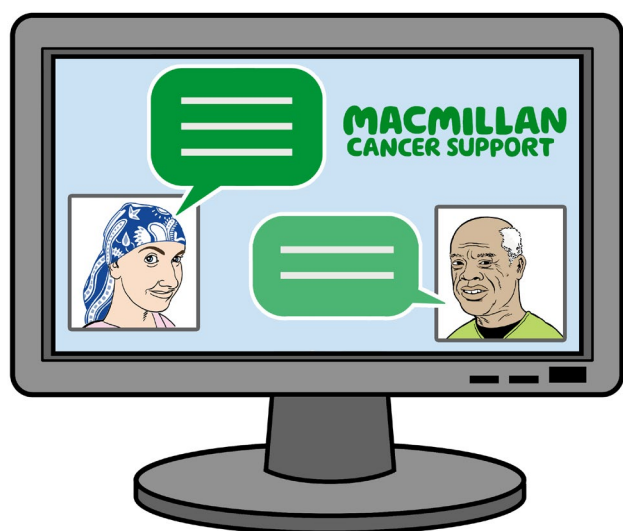
[macmillan.org.uk/informationcentres](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/informationcentres) or call us.



Local support groups

Find a group near you at

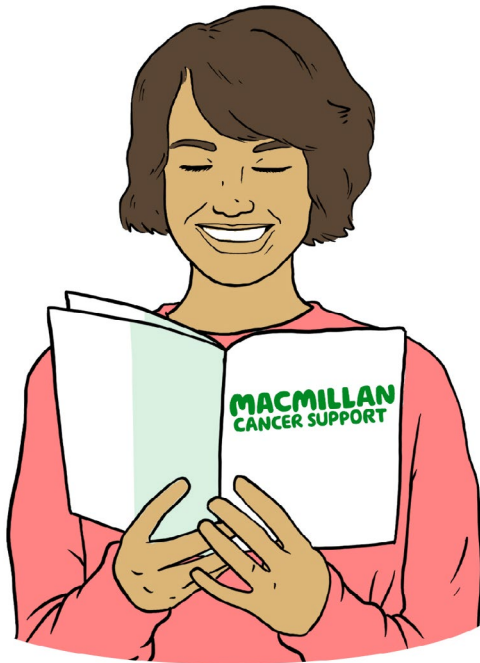
[macmillan.org.uk/supportgroups](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/supportgroups) or call us.



Macmillan Online Community

You can talk to other people in similar situations at

[macmillan.org.uk/community](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/community)



Macmillan can give you information in different ways:

Booklets about cancer

You can order booklets about cancer from

orders.macmillan.org.uk



Videos

You can watch videos about cancer at

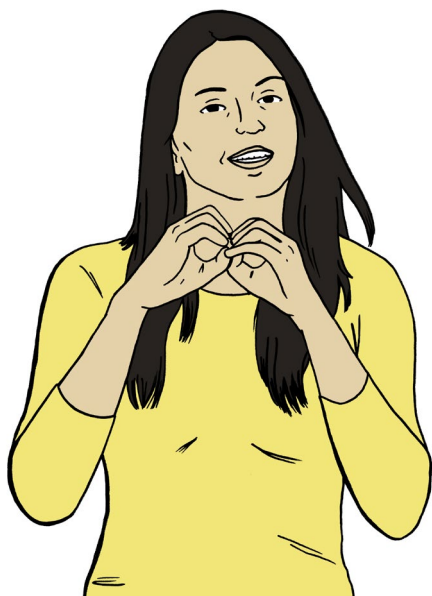
macmillan.org.uk/videos



Audio

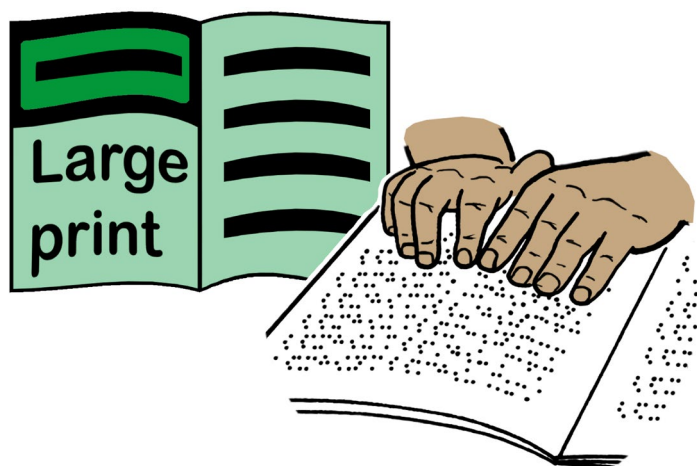
You can listen to information about cancer from

macmillan.org.uk/audio



British Sign Language (BSL)

You can watch information in BSL at macmillan.org.uk/bsl



Large print or Braille

Tell us if you need information in large print or Braille.

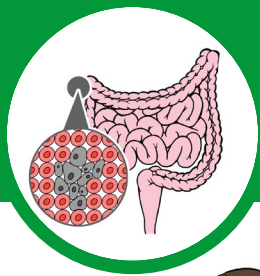
Email: informationproductionteam@macmillan.org.uk



Translations

Tell us if you need information in another language.

Email: informationproductionteam@macmillan.org.uk



More easy read booklets



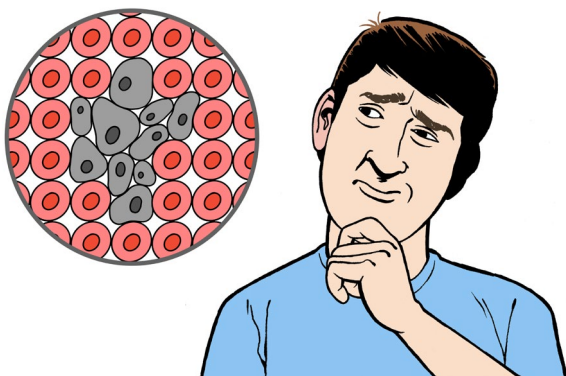
Order more easy read booklets from [macmillan.org.uk/easyread](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/easyread)

There are booklets on lots of topics:



About Macmillan

- How Macmillan Cancer Support can help you
- Holistic Needs Assessment (HNA)



About cancer

- Bowel cancer
- Lung cancer
- Prostate cancer
- What is cancer?



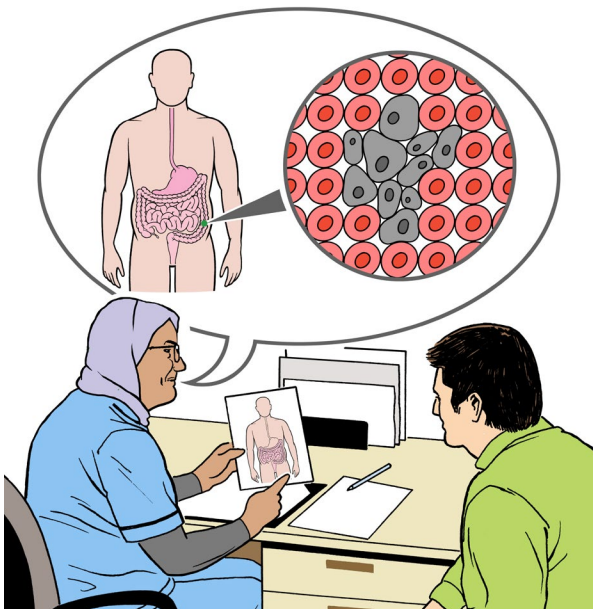
Signs and symptoms

- Breast care and screening
- Cervical screening (smear test)
- How to check your balls (testicles)
- Symptoms of cervical cancer



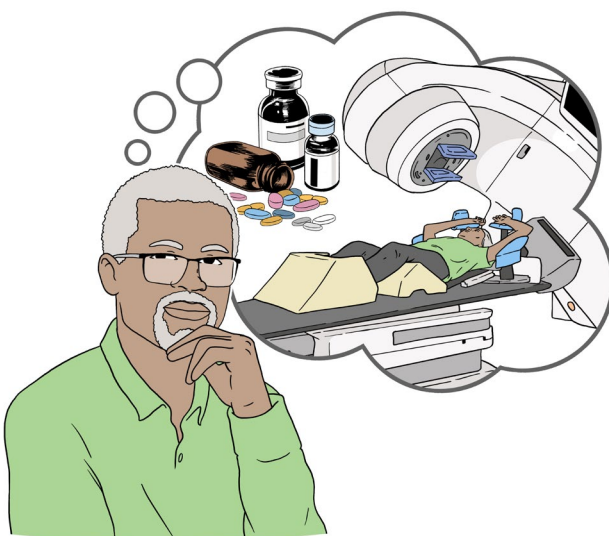
Tests for cancer

- Having a biopsy
- Having a colonoscopy
- Having a CT scan
- Having an endoscopy
- Having examinations and blood tests
- Having an MRI scan
- Having an ultrasound
- Having an x-ray



Being told you have cancer

- Finding out you have cancer
- Getting your test results
- Seeing the doctor



Deciding on your treatment

- All about me – notes for my healthcare team
- Deciding about treatment
- How to get equal healthcare
- If you are unhappy with your care



Treatment for cancer

- Chemotherapy
- Giving your consent
- Having surgery
- Radiotherapy
- Side effects from chemotherapy
- Side effects from radiotherapy



Living a healthy life

- Alcohol and your health
- Be safe in the sun
- Eat a healthy diet
- Exercise
- Have safer sex



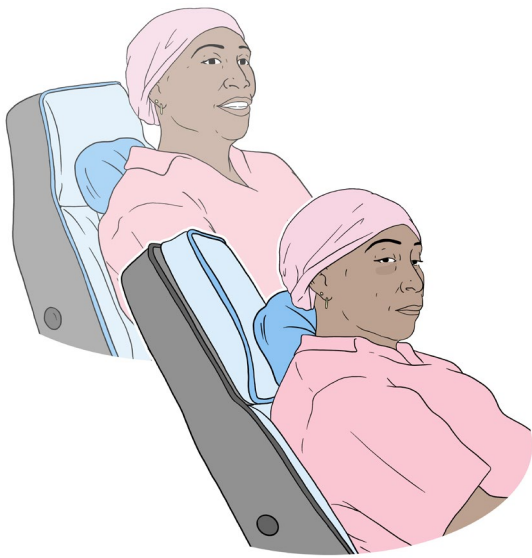
Living with cancer

- Claiming benefits when you have cancer
- Complementary therapies
- Help with costs when you have cancer
- LGBTQ+ people and cancer
- Talking about cancer and your feelings



Living with cancer

- What happens after cancer treatment ends
- Work and cancer
- Your sex life and cancer
- Your social life and cancer



End of life

- Changes that can happen at the end of life
- Choosing where to die
- Things you can do when getting ready to die
- Thinking about your funeral
- Who can help if you are dying
- Your feelings when you are dying



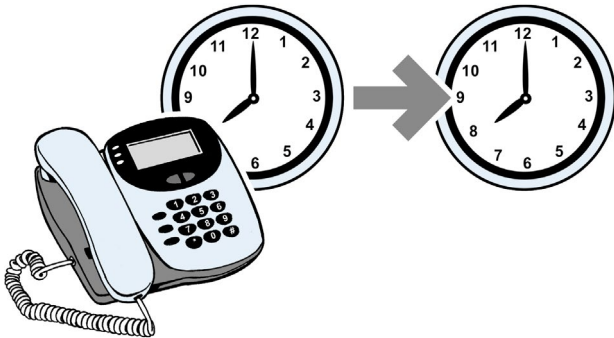
After someone dies

- Going to a funeral when someone dies
- Your feelings when someone dies and what can help

To order easy read booklets like this one go to the website macmillan.org.uk/easyread or call us on **0808 808 00 00**

This booklet is about bowel cancer.

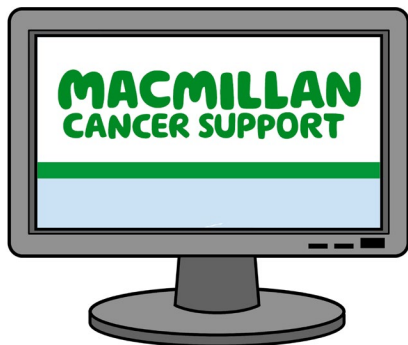
It is for anyone who finds easier words and pictures helpful. If you have more questions about cancer or would like to talk to us, call the Macmillan Support Line.



- Call us free on:
0808 808 00 00
7 days a week from 8am to 8pm.



- If you use a textphone, you can call:
18001 0808 808 00 00



- Or go to the website:
macmillan.org.uk

This easy read booklet has been produced by Macmillan Cancer Support working with CHANGE.

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