

# ASCEND

## What is the Bowel Cancer Screening Programme?

- The NHS Bowel Cancer Screening Programme offers the faecal occult blood (FOB) test, every 2 years to 60 to 74 year olds.
- The Programme is administered by five regional hubs which dispatch the invitations with FOB test kits to the eligible population in England. The hubs also process the FOB test kits and inform the participants and their GPs of the results.
- Depending on the result of the FOB test, the participants are offered routine testing after 2 years (normal result), a repeat test (spoilt kit or unclear result), or referred for assessment at a local screening centre (abnormal result). There are about 15 local screening centres located in each hub.

### For more information about the NHS Bowel Cancer Screening Programme:

☎ Freephone 0800 707 60 60

🌐 <http://www.cancerscreening.nhs.uk/bowel/pc-pack.html>

### References

1. Bowel cancer statistics - UK (March 2011) <http://info.cancerresearchuk.org/cancerstats/types/bowel>
2. Bowel cancer - screening and prevention (March 2011) <http://info.cancerresearchuk.org/cancerstats/types/bowel/screeningandprevention>
3. Hewitson P, Glasziou PP, Irwig L, Towler B, Watson E. Screening for colorectal cancer using the faecal occult blood test, Hemoccult. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews 2007;4, CD001216. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD001216.pub2.
4. Hewitson P, Ward AM, Heneghan C, Halloran SP, Mant D. Primary care endorsement letter and a patient leaflet to improve participation in colorectal cancer screening: results of a factorial randomised trial. British Journal of Cancer 2011;105:475-480

Thank you for taking the time to read this information leaflet

ASC1100912

NHS

Cancer Screening Programmes

# ASCEND

Reducing Inequalities in Bowel Cancer Screening Uptake

A research programme funded by the NIHR

'ASCEND' is a national initiative expected to have an international impact

A collaboration between the NHS Bowel Cancer Screening Programme and the following institutions and organisations:



Please see overleaf

# ASCEND

## Why is bowel cancer screening important?

- Bowel cancer is the second biggest cancer killer in the UK.
- Each year around 40,000 people are newly diagnosed with bowel cancer<sup>1</sup>.
- Bowel cancer screening can detect cancer at an early, localised stage, increasing survival and saving lives<sup>2</sup>.
- Screening, using faecal occult blood testing, reduces mortality from bowel cancer by 25% in people who participate<sup>3</sup>.

## Why is GP endorsement important?

- The NHS Bowel Cancer Screening Programme started in 2006 and, since then, over 10 million people have been invited to take part. However, uptake of screening invitations is only about 52%, which is much lower than that for breast and cervical screening.
- In a small trial, an invitation letter endorsed by the individual's general practice was shown to increase uptake of bowel cancer screening<sup>4</sup>.
- If all general practices endorsed the bowel cancer screening invitation, we expect that 35,000 more people would participate in the NHS Bowel Cancer Screening Programme each year.

# ASCEND

## What is being asked of general practices?

- We are asking for permission to automatically add your practice name to the invitation letters received by your patients.
- Practice names would appear on a random selection of the invitation letters for the duration of this research programme.
- **Adding the practice name to letters will involve little or no additional work for GPs.**

## What should you do now?

- ✉ Please complete and return the reply slip on the letter enclosed, in the Freepost envelope provided

Alternatively:

- ☎ Fax this letter once you have completed the reply slip to the ASCEND team on 020 7594 3051
- ✉ Email the ASCEND team at [rosemary.howe@imperial.ac.uk](mailto:rosemary.howe@imperial.ac.uk) with your full practice name and code
- ☎ Call the ASCEND team on 020 7594 3272 if you have any questions