



9 May 2023

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív
eamon.ocuiv@oireachtas.ie

Our Ref: GM/Communications

PQ19037.23: To ask the Minister for Health the percentage of endoscopy capacity the BowelScreen programme has access to on a yearly basis; if this capacity varies per year; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy,

I refer to the above Parliamentary Question.

Colorectal cancer screening is a preventative health measure. Bowel screening aims to reduce people's risk of developing bowel cancer, by detecting and removing pre-cancerous adenomas in the lining of the bowel. Also, if bowel cancer is found early through bowel screening, it's easier to treat and there's a better chance of recovery.

Bowel cancer screening is available to all eligible people aged 60 to 69 living in Ireland. Once the person gives consent to participate in the programme, they are issued with a Faecal Immunochemical Test (FIT) kit, which is a test done at home and returned by freepost. The FIT looks for a level of blood in a person's stool.

Approximately 95 per cent of participants receive a normal FIT kit result. If a person has a positive (not normal) test result, they are offered a colonoscopy in one of BowelScreen's 15 endoscopy units.

From 2018 to 2022, BowelScreen participants accounted for between 4% and 5% of the total number of colonoscopies delivered nationally per year. This increased to around 10% of all colonoscopies in the hospitals participating in BowelScreen.

BowelScreen invitations are managed in line with endoscopy capacity, to ensure that participants who are referred for further tests following screening can have this done in a timely manner. We are looking at ways to extend capacity and add new units, such as the new unit introduced in Mayo University Hospital in 2022.

During the global pandemic in 2020, 2021 and 2022 endoscopy capacity was limited by a number of factors which meant BowelScreen invitations were delayed by approximately a year. In 2022 the programme worked to stabilise its invitation pattern and target its communications about bowel screening amongst the eligible population. The programme also worked to maximise capacity within endoscopy units, and to establish BowelScreen endoscopy services in new hospitals, to provide additional endoscopy capacity.

Symptom awareness

We continue to emphasise the importance of symptom awareness through all our screening programmes. Bowel screening aims to detect signs of bowel cancer where there are no symptoms. We encourage anyone with symptoms to contact their GP who will give them appropriate advice.

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☎ 353 1 865 9300 ✉ info@screeningservice.ie www.screeningservice.ie





An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Scagthástála
National Screening Service

BowelScreen operates a Freephone information line at 1800 45 45 55. Further information is also available from info@bowelscreen.ie.

I trust this information is of assistance to you, but should you have any further queries please contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Fiona Murphy,
Chief Executive

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An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Scagthástála
National Screening Service



BreastCheck
An Clár Náisiúnta Scagthástála Ciock
The National Breast Screening Programme



CervicalCheck
AN CLÁR NÁISIÚNTA SCAGTHÁSTÁLA CERIBHEACS
THE NATIONAL CERVICAL SCREENING PROGRAMME



BowelScreen
An Clár Náisiúnta Scagthástála Pútóige
The National Bowel Screening Programme



Diabetic RetinaScreen
An Clár Náisiúnta Scagthástála Riatróil do Dhiabéitigh
The National Diabetic Retinal Screening Programme