

# The NHS Bowel Cancer Screening Programme (NHS BCSP)

## Information for Primary Care

### Bowel cancer

- The third most common cancer in the UK
- The second most common cause of cancer deaths in the UK (approximately 16 100 deaths per annum)
- Approximately 34 900 new cases each year
- Lifetime risk of developing bowel cancer in the UK: about 1 in 18 for men and 1 in 20 for women
- 80% of people diagnosed with bowel cancer are 60 years of age or older
- If bowel cancer is diagnosed at Dukes' stage A, 85–95% of patients live for more than five years after treatment

### The Bowel Cancer Screening Programme

- Eligible population: men and women aged 60–69. People aged 70 or over can request screening
- Initial screening is via a faecal occult blood test (FOBt), completed at home
- Screening is offered every two years to the eligible population
- Those with an abnormal FOBt result will be offered a colonoscopy (or imaging if they are unsuitable for colonoscopy)
- Screening could reduce the number of bowel cancer deaths in 60–69 year olds by 16%
- The programme will be rolled out over a three year period, beginning in 2006

### Structure of the programme

- Five regional programme hubs, each coordinating up to 20 screening centres
- Hubs will manage call and recall services, process FOBt kits and arrange screening nurse clinic appointments
- Screening centres will provide screening nurse clinics and endoscopy services

### The faecal occult blood test (FOBt)

- The FOBt kit is completed by participants in their own home
- Six tiny samples from three separate bowel motions are collected
- Bowel motions must be caught before they have been in the toilet bowl. Suggestions for catching the bowel motion are: using a plastic container, folded toilet paper or wrapping the hand in a plastic bag
- Samples are smeared onto the test kit windows using the cardboard sticks provided
- Kits must be received by the hub for testing within 14 days of the first sample being taken

### FOBt results

*Normal result:* 0 out of 6 positive samples

*Unclear result:* 1–4 out of 6 positive samples

*Abnormal result:* 5 or 6 out of 6 positive samples

*Technical failure:* unable to analyse the kit because of a problem in the laboratory

*Spoilt kit:* laboratory is unable to analyse the kit because of an error by the participant when completing the kit

- Patients are notified in writing of the results within two weeks of the kit being processed
- GPs are notified in writing of all results
- Unclear or abnormal results may be caused by conditions other than cancer (eg haemorrhoids)

### **Further investigations (following abnormal FOBt result)**

- An initial appointment with a screening nurse will be offered at the local screening centre
- A detailed explanation will be given of the colonoscopy procedure and its implications, including the risks:
  - heavy bleeding: around 1 in 150
  - perforation: around 1 in 1500
  - death: around 1 in 10 000
- Fitness to undergo colonoscopy will be assessed at the screening nurse clinic
- Participants for whom a colonoscopy is inappropriate may be offered an alternative investigation (imaging)

### **Key screening issues that screening invitees should understand**

- Bowel cancer is the second most common cause of cancer deaths in the UK
- Taking part in bowel cancer screening reduces the chances of dying from bowel cancer
- Bowel cancer screening can also detect polyps that may develop into a cancer over time
- Polyp removal during colonoscopy can reduce the chances of developing bowel cancer in the future
- There is a chance that a cancer can be missed if it was not bleeding when the screening test was taken
- An abnormal test result means that further investigations will be offered
- Most people who have a colonoscopy will not have cancer
- Although rare, there are risks associated with having a colonoscopy
- Not all bowel cancers detected by screening can be successfully treated
- Although some people may find completing the FOBt kit unpleasant, it can be done in the privacy of the participant's own home

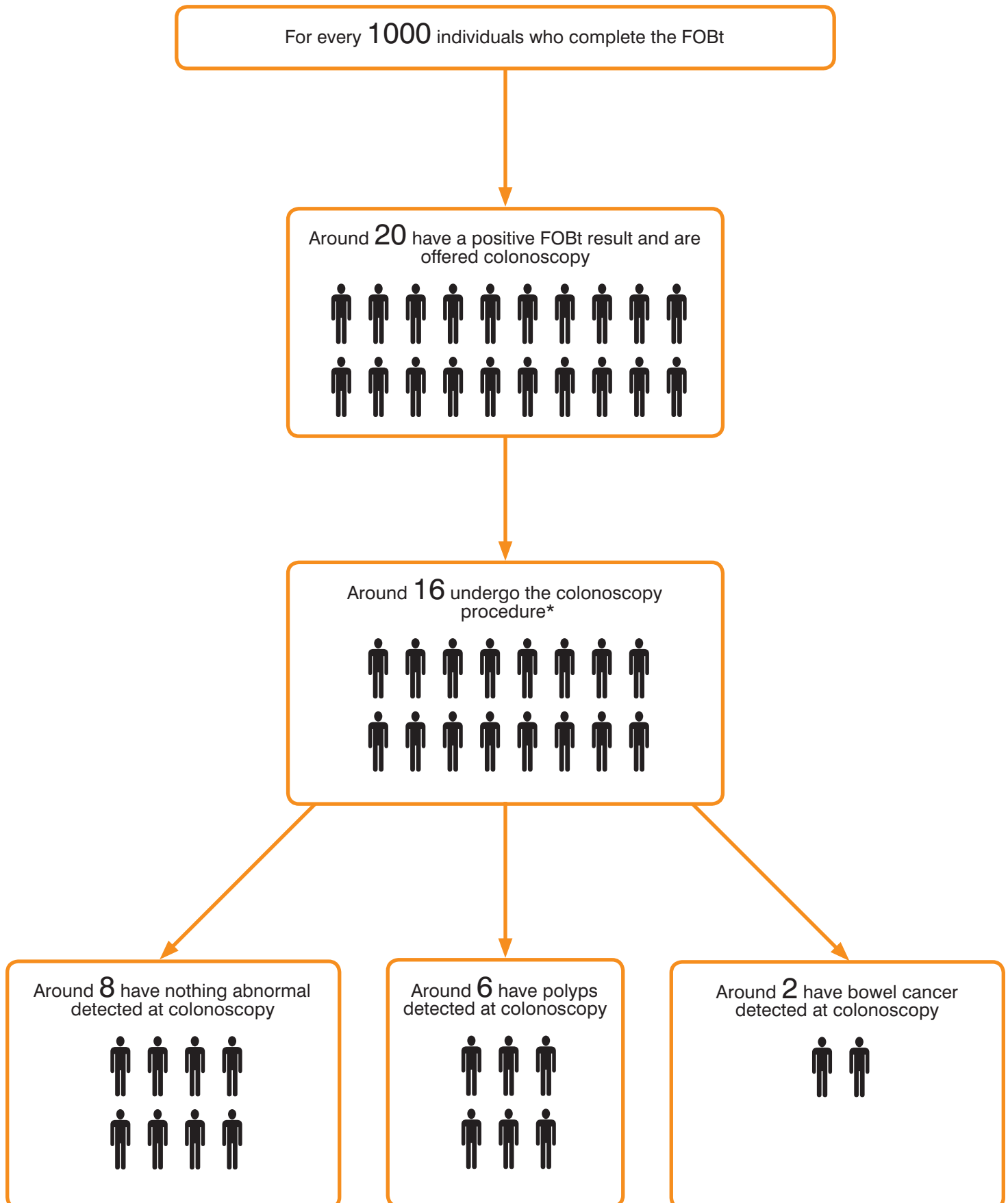
### **Contacts and useful information**

Individuals aged 70 or over who would like to request an FOBt kit should call the regional programme hub on **FREEPHONE 0800 707 60 60**

### **For more information about bowel cancer and bowel cancer screening**

- Contact the programme hub on FREEPHONE 0800 707 60 60
- Visit our cancer screening website at <http://www.cancerscreening.nhs.uk>
- Visit the NHS Direct website at <http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk>
- Visit the Cancerbackup website at <http://www.cancerbackup.org.uk> or call 0808 800 1234
- Visit the CancerHelp website at <http://www.cancerhelp.org.uk>
- Visit the Bowel Cancer UK website at <http://www.bowelcanceruk.org.uk> or call 08708 50 60 50
- Visit the Beating Bowel Cancer website at <http://www.beatingbowelcancer.org> or call 0208 892 5256

# Predicted outcomes of bowel cancer screening



\* Based on an uptake rate of 78%. Reasons for participants not undergoing colonoscopy may include non-attendance, having a procedure performed privately, currently undergoing therapy/polyp follow up, having had a recent diagnostic evaluation or having no colon.

# The screening pathway

