

Appendix 2, Information pamphlet (English short version)

Invitation to screening

In Denmark, 50,000 individuals are affected by colorectal cancer each year, where most of these individuals are beyond the age of 50 years. Since you are in the age group 50-74 years, we would like to give you the opportunity to be examined for signs of colorectal cancer.

In this pamphlet you can read more about colorectal cancer and thereby have a better basis to make a decision about whether to receive the offered screening or not. By participating in the screening programme, you can reduce your risk of dying from colorectal cancer, but screening may also have some negative consequences.

Based on an overall assessment of the benefits versus harms, The Danish Health Authorities recommend the screening programme, but it is important that you make your own choice.

What is my risk?

50-59 years:

18 out of 10,000 people in the age group 50-59 years will die from colorectal cancer before the age of 60.

4 out of 18 people will avoid death from colorectal cancer if they participate in the programme in 10 years.

60-69 years:

55 out of 10,000 people in the age group 60-69 years will die from colorectal cancer before the age of 70.

12 out of 55 people will avoid death from colorectal cancer if they participate in the programme in 10 years.

70-79 years:

50 out of 10,000 people in the age group 70-79 years will die from colorectal cancer before the age of 80.

11 out of 50 people will avoid death from colorectal cancer if they participate in the programme in 5 years.

YOUR RISK OF GETTING COLORECTAL CANCER IS INCREASED:

- The older you are
- If you have a family history of colorectal cancer
- If your diet contains few fibers and great amounts of red meat
- If you are overweight
- If you smoke or have a large alcohol intake

Potential benefits of the programme

Lower mortality from colorectal cancer: If the cancer is detected at an early stage, the treatment possibilities are better. By participating in the programme, you can reduce your risk of dying from colorectal cancer.

Mild treatment: If the cancer is diagnosed at an early stage there is a greater chance that you can be treated with more gentle surgical techniques and your risk of receiving additional medical treatment is reduced.

Potential harms of the programme

Worries and false alarms: Even though the stool test shows signs of blood it is not certain that you have cancer or other diseases in the bowel. The bleeding can be caused by a scratch or a haemorrhoid. Besides that, the waiting time for the results can cause fear and anxiety.

False sense of security: You can still have or get colorectal cancer, although the stool test does not show signs of blood.

Discomfort: Not all people are keen on taking a sample from their stool. Most people experience discomfort during the bowel cleansing and colonoscopy, but the degree of discomfort differs.

Overtreatment: the examinations can detect cancer that in some cases never would have appeared in your lifetime. The investigations can also find polyps that would not develop into cancer. Thereby, by participating in the investigations you are at risk of getting unnecessary treatment which in rare cases can cause harms.

The investigation

TEST OF YOUR STOOL

The investigation for signs of colorectal cancer includes that you send a sample of your stool which will be examined for signs of invisible blood. If there are no signs of blood in your sample, you will be provided with the opportunity to have the test again in 2 years.

COLONOSCOPY

If your sample indicates signs of blood in your stool you will be offered a colonoscopy. The colonoscopy can reveal if you have cancer or polyps (bulges in the bowel) that can develop into cancer. Before the colonoscopy you have to clean the bowel with laxatives. If you reject the colonoscopy you will still receive an invitation to screening again after two years.

Facts about the programme

The following are the approximate results that would be achieved if 10,000 people participate in one round of the screening programme:

9323 get the result of no signs of blood in the stool, **16** of these will later in life be diagnosed with colorectal cancer

677 get the result of signs of blood in the stool and will therefore be offered a coloscopy

37 get diagnosed with colorectal cancer after the coloscopy

179 get the result of polyps with moderate to high risk of colorectal cancer

380 get the result that they don't have cancer or polyps even though they had blood in their stool

1 gets severe complications e.g. perforation of the bowel, bleeding or a haematoma in the intestine wall.

What does the colonoscopy show?

If your colonoscopy shows signs of blood in the stool you will be offered a colonoscopy

There are three possible results of the colonoscopy:

1. **You do not have cancer or polyps:** your bowel was normal, or a non-serious cause of the bleeding was found, i.e. a haemorrhoid. Your risk of developing colorectal cancer is small. Therefore, you will be invited to screening again after 8 years if you, at that time, are below the age of 75 years.
2. **You have polyps:** If polyps are found in your bowel you will be offered to have them removed and the polyps will be investigated for abnormalities. Depending on this result you may be offered polyp surveillance.
3. **You have cancer:** if colorectal cancer is found you will be offered a fast and organised treatment pathway ("cancer patient pathway").

SYMPTOMS OF COLORECTAL CANCER:

- Change in stool pattern
- The bowel doesn't empty completely
- Unexplained fatigue
- Stomach pain
- Blood or mucus in the stool
- Unexplained weight loss

Where can I get help?

If you have questions about the investigation, please contact the Health Region you live in. For more details about who to contact, see the invitation letter sent to you.

If you have symptoms of colorectal cancer you need to contact your general practitioner, even though you do also participate in the screening programme.

If you want to know more about colorectal cancer and benefits and harms of participating in the screening programme you can read more at: sst.dk/tarmkraeft

Approximately 5,000 people in Denmark get colorectal cancer each year. Most of them are above the age of 50 years.

Almost 2,000 people in Denmark die each year from colorectal cancer.