

Bowel Screening

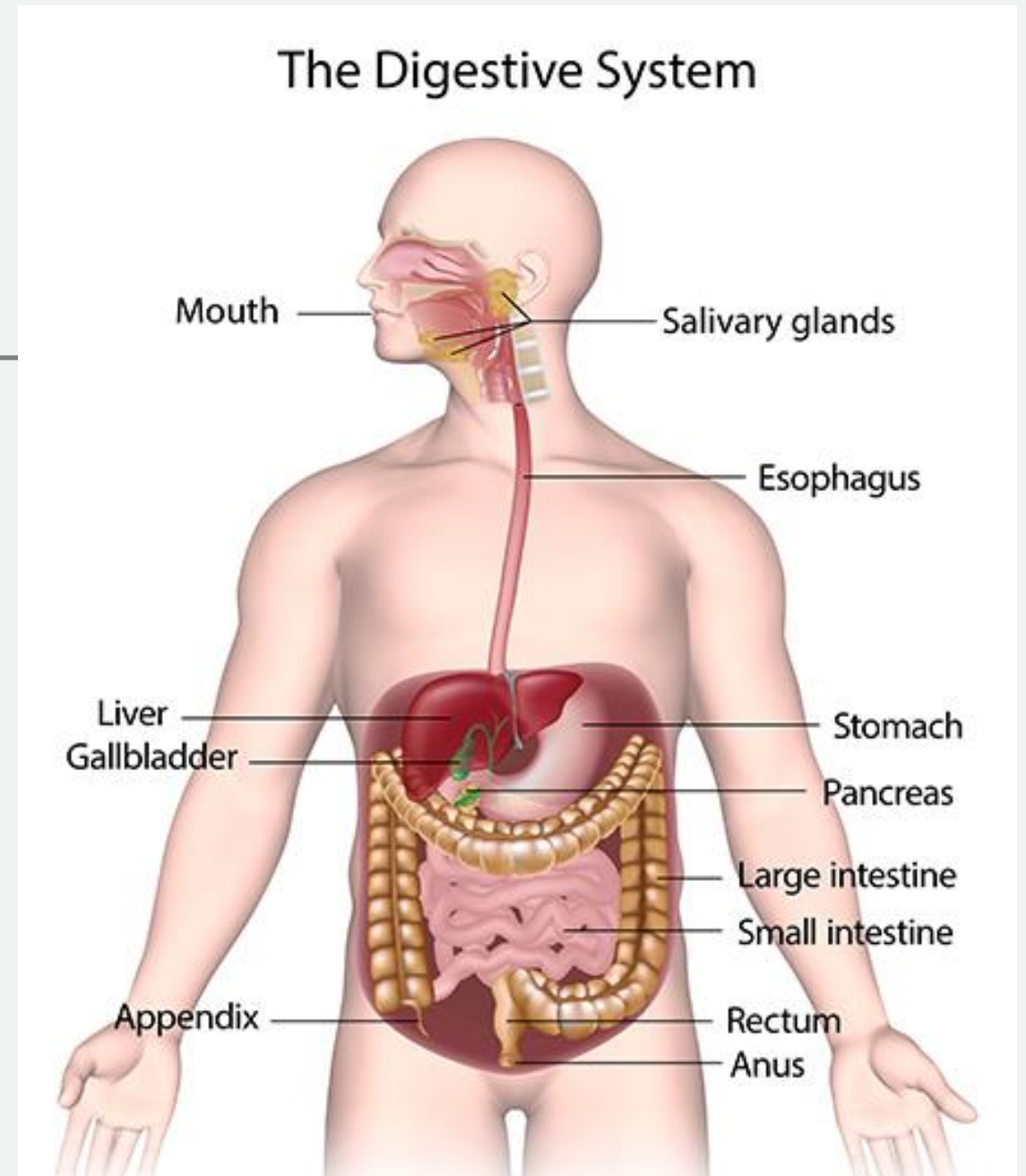
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Definitions

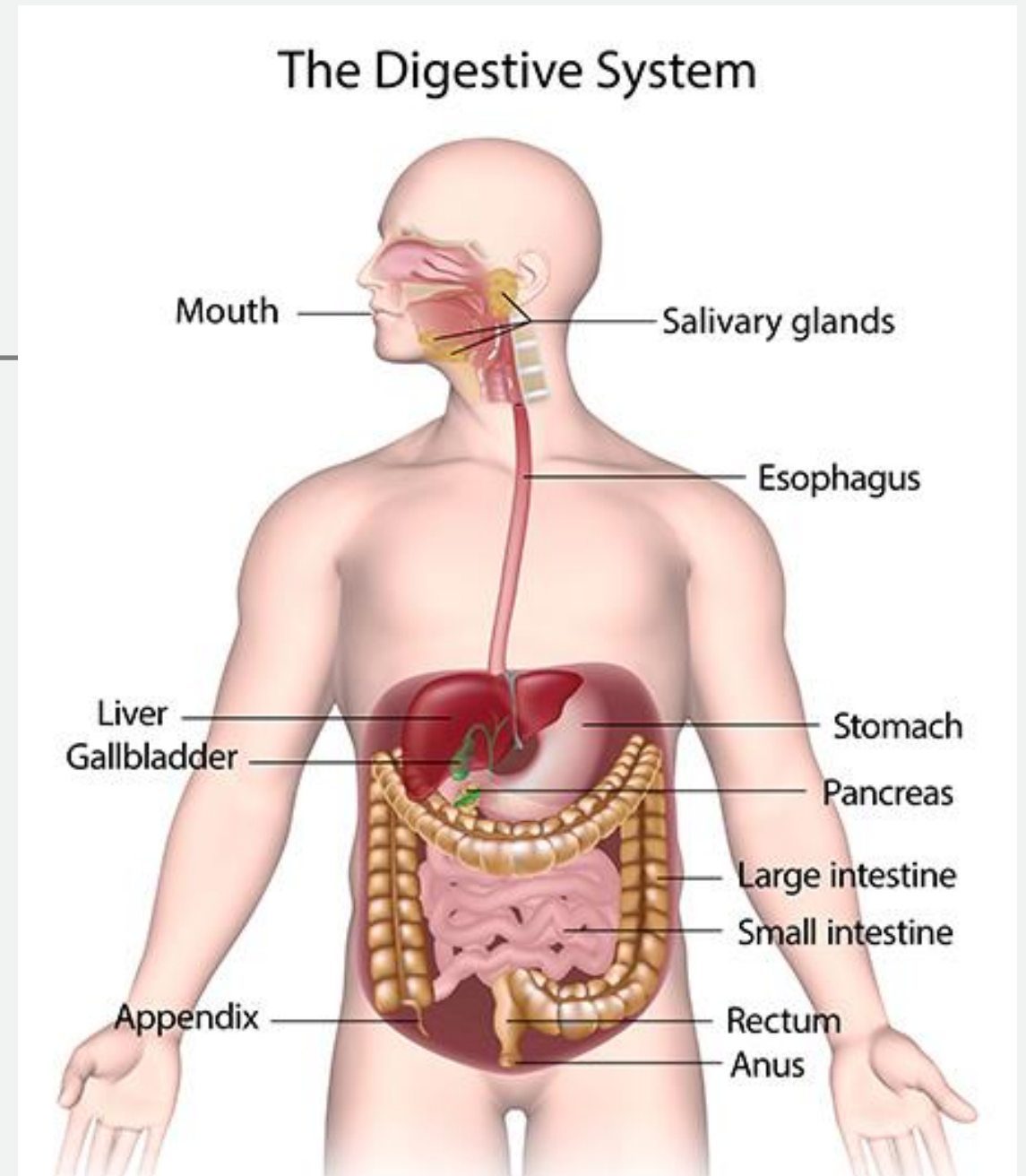
The **digestive system** is made up of the **gastrointestinal tract** and the **liver, pancreas, and gallbladder**. The GI tract is a series of hollow organs joined in a long, twisting tube from the mouth to the anus. The hollow organs that make up the GI tract are the mouth, esophagus, stomach, small intestine, large intestine, and anus.

The liver, pancreas, and gallbladder are the solid organs of the digestive system.



Definitions

Bowel - The bowel is **the lower part of the digestive system**. The bowel goes from the stomach to the back passage (anus)



Bowel Cancer

- Bowel cancer is a common type of cancer in both men and women
- Bowel cancer is the 4th most common type of cancer - About 1 in 20 people will get it during their lifetime.

Stats from 2015 approx:

- **Colorectal cancer:**
 - Around 40,000 new colorectal cancers are diagnosed each year in the UK, up to a quarter of these following screening.
- **Anal cancer:**
 - Just over 1000 new anal cancers are diagnosed each year in the UK
 - Anal cancer occurs in both sexes, though nearly two-thirds occur in women.

Bowel cancer

In 2015, 41,804 new cases were diagnosed [[Cancer Research UK, 2019a](#)]:

- 34,729 in England
- 55% of cases were male and 45% female.

In 2016 there were 16,384 deaths from bowel cancer in the UK – it is the second most common cause of cancer death in the UK

The risk of developing bowel cancer increases with age.

- Around 80% of people diagnosed with bowel cancer are aged over 60 years (approx. in 2018) - *but it can affect anyone of any age*
- Regular bowel cancer screening has been shown to reduce the risk of dying from bowel cancer by over 16% - approx. 2016]

5 year survival rate:

The percentage of people in a study or treatment group who are alive five years after they were diagnosed with or started treatment for a disease, such as cancer.

- The 5-year survival rate following diagnosis of bowel cancer is 59% – survival is strongly related to stage at diagnosis – approx. 2019
- The 5-year survival rate can be improved from 7% for a metastatic cancer at diagnosis to 93% for a bowel cancer detected early at Dukes' stage A (refers to an earlier stage of bowel cancer classification)– approx. 2017

Why screen?

The NHS Bowel Cancer Screening Program was introduced in 2006 with the aim of identifying bowel cancer at an early stage when treatment is more likely to be successful.

Bowel cancer screening can save lives.

Screening is a way of testing healthy people to see if they show any early signs of cancer.

The test can also find polyps (non-cancerous growths), which might develop into cancer. Polyps can usually be removed (if safe and needed), to lower the risk of bowel cancer.

Bowel Screening

- You need to be registered with a GP to receive your screening invitations. Make sure your GP practice has your correct address so your kit is posted to the right place.
- Everyone aged 60 to 74 years who is registered with a GP and lives in England is automatically sent an NHS bowel cancer screening kit every 2 years.
- The programme is expanding so that everyone aged 50 to 59 years will be eligible for screening. This is happening gradually over 4 years and started in April 2021 with 56 year olds.
- If you are below the screening age and are worried you may have symptoms of bowel cancer, go to see your GP.
- If you're 75 or over, you can ask for a kit every 2 years by phoning the free bowel cancer screening helpline on 0800 707 60 60.

FIT TEST

- **Faecal immunochemical test (FIT)**

- The bowel screening programmes across the UK uses a test called a Faecal Immunochemical Test (FIT).

- FIT looks for hidden blood in the stool (poo).

- [Video on the fit test and more: https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/bowel-cancer/getting-diagnosed/screening](https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/bowel-cancer/getting-diagnosed/screening)

- About 2 weeks after your test, you will get a letter with your results.

Call the free NHS bowel cancer screening helpline on 0800 707 60 60 if:

- you have not had your result after 2 weeks from when you sent off your kit
- you want to know more about screening (you do not need to call the helpline when you become eligible for screening – you'll be contacted)
- you do not want to be invited for NHS bowel cancer screening



Benefits vs Risks

Discuss

Potential symptoms of bowel cancer and when to see your GP

- Abdominal pain/discomfort
- Bloating
- Change in bowel habit
- Blood from the back passage or in the stool
- Mucus from the back passage or in the stool
- Nausea or Vomiting
- Unintentional or unexplained weight loss
- Reduction in appetite
- Abdominal swelling
- Lump in the abdomen or back passage
- Fatigue for no obvious reason

If you have any of these symptoms, if you have any concerns or worries about your health, if you feel you are at risk or may be at risk of developing bowel cancer, if you feel you are due a screening test or have missed your screening test, if you are unsure about your symptoms or if you have any questions related to your symptoms, screening or health- please book in to speak to your nhs gp on the day. Out of hours please seek help/advice by calling 111 on the day or visit urgent care/a and e on the day for worsening/severe/urgent symptoms or if you feel unwell.

How to reduce your risk of bowel cancer

- Participation in bowel screening when offered.
- Maintenance of a healthy weight.
- Eating a diet high in non-starchy vegetables, fruit, pulses, and whole grains, keeping red meat consumption to a minimum and avoiding processed meat. More info here re red meat: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/food-guidelines-and-food-labels/red-meat-and-the-risk-of-bowel-cancer/#:~:text=But%20eating%20a%20lot%20of,your%20risk%20of%20bowel%20cancer.>
- Avoidance of alcohol or keeping consumption to within recommended limits.
- Avoidance of smoking.
- Regular physical activity (see nhs links below for more info/ guidelines for this)
- Monitoring stools and symptoms daily – promptly seeking help on the day with your nhs gp/111/urgent care for symptoms

More info on this and other info on healthy living via nhs links below:

- <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-weight/>
- <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-weight/managing-your-weight/>
- <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/>

Useful links

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/bowel-cancer-screening/>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bowel-cancer-screening-kit-how-to-use> (available in various languages)

<https://www.bowelcanceruk.org.uk/about-bowel-cancer/screening/>

<https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/bowel-cancer/getting-diagnosed/screening>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bowel-cancer-screening-easy-guide>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/bowel-cancer/>

<https://www.bowelcanceruk.org.uk/about-bowel-cancer/symptoms/> (includes a symptom diary)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bowel-cancer-screening-benefits-and-risks>

Call the screening helpline on 0800 707 60 60 or visit [NHS](#) for more information about bowel screening in England

References

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/bowel-cancer-screening/>

<https://www.bowelcanceruk.org.uk/about-bowel-cancer/screening/>

<https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/bowel-cancer/getting-diagnosed/screening>

<https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/bowel-cancer/getting-diagnosed/screening-for-people-high-risk>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bowel-cancer-screening-kit-how-to-use>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/bowel-cancer/>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bowel-cancer-screening-easy-guide>

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<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bowel-cancer-screening-benefits-and-risks>

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<https://cks.nice.org.uk/topics/bowel-screening/background-information/why-screen/>