

More than 1,000 bowel cancer deaths expected in South Western Sydney over next 5 years

Community urged not to ignore potentially lifesaving screening test

New figures from the Cancer Institute NSW show that by the end of 2021 a further 3,200 people in South Western Sydney will be diagnosed with bowel cancer and 1,040 will lose their life to the disease¹. This means that on average someone will die from bowel cancer in this community every two days. However, experts say it is possible to change these figures through a very simple test.

The National Bowel Cancer Screening Program sends a bowel cancer screening kit to all Australians 50 to 74 on a regular basis. This kit, which can be done in a person's home, can detect potential warning signs of bowel cancer at a very early stage, before symptoms develop. This means people are more likely to be diagnosed at the earliest stages when the chances of survival are at their highest. In fact, for some, a positive result on a bowel cancer screening test can lead to changes being detected and treated before they turn into cancer.

South Western Sydney Local Health District Cancer Services Director Geoff Delaney said bowel cancer is the second most common cancer in the District and the second most common cause of cancer deaths².

"Early detection of bowel cancer is critical, if discovered early, the survival rate is relatively high," Professor Delaney said.

Two thirds (65%) of the bowel cancer cases diagnosed in south western Sydney have already spread by the time they are detected².

"I always explain to my patients that if bowel cancer is caught early enough, it is extremely treatable which is why screening is so important," he said.

Two thirds (65%) of the bowel cancer cases diagnosed in South Western Sydney have already spread by the time they are detected².

The state's Chief Cancer Officer and CEO of the Cancer Institute NSW, Professor David Currow stresses the importance of the test.

"The most important thing that a person can do to improve their chances of surviving a bowel cancer diagnosis is to have the cancer detected early. When you get your kit in the post, don't put it off. It could save your life."

The National Bowel Cancer Screening Program is a free service which mails screening kits to people aged 50 to 74 years. For more information and to check your eligibility, visit cancerscreening.gov.au or call 1800 118 868

¹ NSW Cancer Registry data (population data are sourced from NSW Ministry of Health Secure Analytics for Population Health Research and Intelligence (SAPHaRI) and NSW Department of Planning and Environment 2016 Final Population projections)

² Annual NSW cancer incidence and mortality data set, 2012 (sourced from the NSW Cancer Registry). Population data are sourced from the Epidemiology and Surveillance Branch, NSW Ministry of Health.



**cancer
institute**
NSW



Health
South Western Sydney
Local Health District

Media release

If you have symptoms such as a persistent change in bowel habit, pain in your abdomen, bleeding, tiredness or weight loss, or if you are worried about your bowel health in any way, then you should not wait for screening, but contact your doctor.