

Faecal Immunochemical Testing (FIT) in Patients with Signs or Symptoms of Suspected Colorectal Cancer (CRC): A Joint Guideline from The Association of Coloproctology of Great Britain & Ireland (ACPGBI) and the British Society of Gastroenterology (BSG).

Lay Summary

Bowel symptoms are common and people frequently attend their GP to be assessed. Fortunately for the majority of people, bowel symptoms may be due to a change in the function of the bowel in response to diet and other factors affecting their environment. However, a small number of people with bowel symptoms will have a more serious underlying cause which may include a tumour of the bowel.

To help GPs to identify patients who need further investigation for a suspected bowel tumour, a new test has been introduced. This is called the FIT Test (Faecal Immunochemical Test). The FIT Test is a simple test which patients can do themselves and it tests for tiny amounts of blood in the poo, which can help determine if further tests are needed.

Why have these Guidelines been written?

The FIT test is a relatively new test, so these Guidelines have been written to provide a framework for using the FIT test in the best way. These Guidelines are written primarily to guide the use of FIT testing by Health Professionals and include information on:

- The symptoms and signs that should be assessed by FIT testing
- Where FIT testing should be done
- How a patient should be managed if the FIT test level is raised
- How a patient should be managed if the FIT test level is not raised (“Safety Netting”)
- What a GP should do if a patient does not return a FIT test after being asked to do it
- The accuracy of a FIT test in the detection of bowel tumours
- Ensuring equity and access to FIT testing
- Setting up a system for arranging FIT tests
- The areas where there is a lack of information and further research studies are needed

These guidelines were written by a group of specialists, GPs and patients brought together by the Association of Coloproctology of Great Britain and Ireland (ACPGBI) and the British Society of Gastroenterology (BSG).

Common Questions That Patients Ask Regarding FIT Testing:

Why will my doctor ask me to do a FIT test?

FIT testing can help your doctor to assess you if you have bowel symptoms. The test can help your doctor to either reassure you or indicate that you need further tests.

How Do I Do a FIT Test?

The GP will arrange for a FIT testing kit to be sent to you, along with instructions on how to do the test. The kit includes a test stick which the patient inserts into their poo and a pot to place the stick in. This is then placed in a special envelope which is also provided and sent to be analysed. The GP or the local hospital will then inform the patient of the result.

What happens if the FIT Test Indicates that there is blood in my poo?

If the FIT test indicates that there is an increased level of blood in the poo then the GP will refer the patient to the local hospital for a further test, either a Camera test (Colonoscopy) or an 'X-ray' type of test called a CT scan to examine the bowel to see if there is a significant internal cause for the bowel symptoms.

What happens if the FIT Test indicates that there is no blood in my poo?

The majority of patients will not have a raised level of blood in the poo and the GP will be able to reassure these patients that it is very unlikely that there is a significant cause of their bowel symptoms. It is likely that their symptoms will settle down. The GP will advise the patient that if the symptoms do not settle after the FIT test then they should seek reassessment by their GP. In this situation, the GP may be able to reassure the patient but if there is ongoing concern, they may refer the patient for further assessment by a Specialist in the local hospital.