

Why do you receive an invitation from your local health authority?

To remind men and women aged 50 to 74 that early diagnosis of Colorectal Cancer is possible, through the regular screening test for the detection of occult (invisible) blood in the feces every two years, an effective way for the prevention and early diagnosis of bowel cancer.

The objective is to remove any polyps that may be present at an early stage before they cause any ailment. In this way, the intervention is less aggressive, and the treatment is more successful. Polyps are small growths on the inner lining of the colon or rectum that could slowly evolve into cancer. Since they can bleed in an invisible way, the Fecal Occult Blood Test can reveal them.

The Screening Program is offered free of charge, starting from FOBT (Fecal Occult Blood Test) to other examinations needed, and including the treatment, if necessary. If you have never received an invitation from your local health authorities or you haven't joined the program, you can call the toll-free hotline number of your local health centers to ask for an appointment.

What is the fecal occult blood test (FOBT)?

It is a specialized laboratory test, from a single sample, that allows to detect even very small traces of blood not apparently visible. If this blood was to come from

polyps or adenomas, a subsequent colonoscopy will allow for prompt removal. A local health assistant will give you a little bag containing a specimen container with instructions. Remove the container from the bag and collect a small sample of your stool. Put it in the container, close it and put it back in the bag. Store it in the refrigerator.

You need to hand back the specimen container to the local health centre within 3 days after collection. The specimen container can also be collected and returned in many pharmacies.

After taking the test?

If the test result is normal (no blood detected), the Screening Center will send a communication of the negative result directly at your home through a letter, and after two years they will send a new invitation to repeat the test.

Out of 100 people who take the test, 5 or 6 may test positive for the presence of blood in the stool for different causes (example fissures, diverticulitis, etc.). It is very important yet to check if the blood comes from any polyps.

If the test result is positive, the Screening Center will contact the person by telephone to invite them to undergo a colonoscopy, still free of charge, at a referral hospital (it can be carried out under sedation by request of the patient). Any further examination and successive treatments, if necessary, are still booked and provided directly and free of charge by the local health authority.

Can I be confident?

The FOBT (Fecal Occult Blood Test) is a highly sensitive immunochemical test that uses specific antibodies to detect human blood (anti-globulin antibodies) to indicate colon bleeding. This test allows you to collect a single stool specimen sample and not three samples as required in other tests. It is not necessary to follow any special diet.

The centres for analysis of the FOBT, present in analysis laboratories, conduct at least 60,000 fecal samples screenings each year. All procedures must follow national and European guidelines and are subjected to quality controls.

