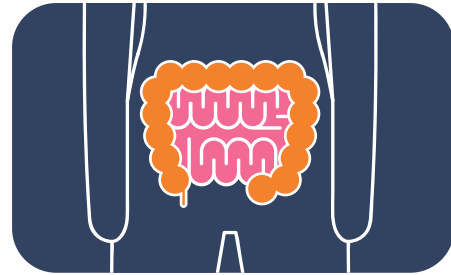


Bowel Cancer



Symptoms

- Unexplained weight loss - more than 5% of the patient's normal weight within 3 months
- Poor appetite
- Extreme tiredness without an obvious cause
- Persistent change in bowel habit for 3 weeks or more – associated with increased frequency of needing the toilet and/or stools which are more liquid than normal
- Blood in their stool for 3 weeks or more – especially in patients without a history of piles (haemorrhoids)
- Stools which appear much darker, or much paler than normal for more than 2 weeks
- Persistent abdominal pain or discomfort without obvious cause
- Any abdominal or rectal mass
- Abdominal bloating after eating



Ask

- How old is the patient?
- How long has the patient experienced these symptoms?
- greater or less than 3 weeks
- What is the change in bowel habits?
- constipation, diarrhoea, change in frequency
- How much weight have they lost?
And over how long?
- Have they noticed any blood in the toilet when they pass a stool?
How long has the patient been aware of this symptom ?
- Have they previously suffered with piles (haemorrhoids)? Do they have any other bowel disorder? Is it normal for them to have blood in their stool ?
- Do they experience abdominal pain when they eat?

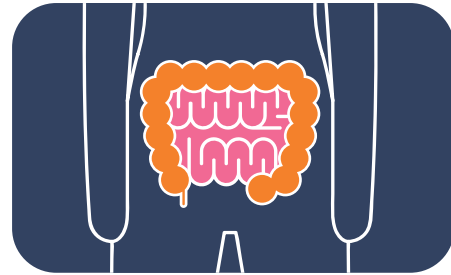


Pharmacy Products

- Patients with altered bowel habits may buy loperamide repeatedly to reduce these symptoms
- Patients with abdominal discomfort may purchase hyoscine and/or peppermint or analgesic medications
- Patients can sometimes present with bowel obstruction and therefore may ask for multiple laxatives

The full Let's Communicate Cancer course is available by clicking [here](#)
Version 1: The information provided is in line with current guidance on March 2023

Bowel Cancer



Follow up/Referral

Patients with the following should be encouraged to make an urgent appointment with their GP

- Aged over 40 with unexplained blood in their stool for ≥ 3 weeks one or both of -
 - weight loss
 - abdominal pain
- Aged over 50 with unexplained blood in their stool for ≥ 3 weeks with or without other symptoms
- Aged over 60 with changes in bowel habit for ≥ 3 weeks with or without other symptoms such as excessive tiredness

Patients with the following should be encouraged to make a non-urgent appointment with their GP

- Patients with any of the symptoms listed above lasting for 3 weeks or more which cannot be explained

Please be aware that these symptoms may, or may not, be caused by cancer but should be investigated to help diagnose patients with other conditions which also require treatment.

Please advise patients who do not meet the criteria for urgent, or non-urgent review by a GP to come back to a pharmacy for further advice if the symptoms do not resolve within a further 7 days.

Please refer to the Let's Communicate Cancer e-learning programme for further training resources for pharmacy staff regarding cancer, its management and the role of pharmacy staff.

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