



Press release

Embargoed: 1 April 2011: 00:01

Alarming New Figures Show Low Awareness of Bowel Cancer Symptoms 40% of Brits claim not to know any symptoms

Beating Bowel Cancer has released shocking new data that shows the lack of awareness of symptoms of the UK's second biggest cancer killer.

Independent research commissioned by the charity to mark Bowel Cancer Awareness Month found that over half of men (52%), and over a quarter of women (29%), claim not to know any of the symptoms of bowel cancer, and when questioned, fewer than a third of people (32%) in Britain were able to name two or more symptomsⁱ.

Mark Flannagan, Chief Executive of Beating Bowel Cancer said, *"Bowel cancer claims a life every 30 minutes, so it's very worrying that 4 in 10 people (40%) claim not to know any of the symptoms.ⁱ During April alone, over 3,200 people in the UK will be diagnosed with bowel cancer and more than 1,350 will die from the disease, often because they were diagnosed too late.ⁱⁱ*

"This Bowel Cancer Awareness Month we are calling for people to take a few moments to learn the symptoms of bowel cancer, and when to act upon them. It could save your life."

Further breakdown of the results showed that people in the South West and East of England had the best knowledge of the high risk symptoms.ⁱⁱⁱ

National Clinical Director for Cancer, Professor Mike Richards said, *"We know the main reason our cancer survival rates lag behind other countries is because too many people are diagnosed late.*

"This is why our cancer outcomes strategy focuses on earlier diagnosis and why we recently launched the 'Be Clear on Cancer' campaign to raise symptom awareness of bowel cancer. Our message is clear: if for the last three weeks you have had blood in your poo or it has been looser, you need to tell your doctor."

During April, Beating Bowel Cancer is introducing a host of new initiatives to raise awareness of bowel cancer symptoms and support those affected by bowel cancer, including the launch of a new website www.beatingbowelcancer.org.

- Ends -



**For media information contact Kate Philipson on 020 8973 0008 or kate@beatingbowelcancer.org.
Case studies, charity spokespeople and medical experts are available for interview.**

Beating Bowel Cancer spokespeople can be contacted directly for interview or comment at any time:

- **Kate Philipson, PR Manager: Direct - 020 8973 0008 / Mobile - 07973 942 774**
- **Mark Flannagan, Chief Executive: Mobile - 07827 276507 / Home - 01483 838169**



Notes to editors

New data

All figures are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 2028 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken online between 11th - 14th March 2011. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+).

A summary of the data is below:

Do you know what the symptoms of bowel cancer are?	No, I don't know any symptoms of bowel cancer	Correctly named two or more symptoms	Named rectal bleeding (high risk symptom)	Named change in bowel habit (high risk symptom)
National Average	40%	32%	58%	27%
Men only	52%	22%	49%	19%
Women only	29%	41%	66%	36%
North East	42%	37%	59%	28%
North West	41%	24%	50%	21%
Yorkshire & the Humber	41%	32%	60%	24%
East Midlands	42%	27%	53%	28%
West Midlands	45%	29%	55%	31%
East of England	24%	40%	71%	36%
London	46%	23%	47%	19%
South East	45%	32%	55%	25%
South West	30%	46%	69%	42%
Wales	47%	33%	52%	26%
Scotland	40%	37%	66%	26%

Bowel Cancer Awareness Month

April is Bowel Cancer Awareness Month. To mark the month Beating Bowel Cancer is launching the following initiatives:

- **New website – www.beatingbowelcancer.org** – a new look website full of the same quality information and advice as ever but with more interactive features including: filmed answers to frequently asked questions by nurse Louisa, new patient films, and forums for both patients and healthcare professionals.
- **Beyond Bowel Cancer** – the UK's largest meeting for bowel cancer patients and survivors will take place at the Royal College of Physicians in London on Saturday 2nd April. Speakers on the day include National Cancer Director, Professor Sir Mike Richards.
- **The Bottom Line** – a short film launching in April. We follow a man as he discovers bowel cancer symptoms, does he act upon them or not? Watch the two alternate outcomes unfold, in parallel.
- **Information Standard accreditation** – all Beating Bowel Cancer patient information is now endorsed by the Information Standard.



- **Rowlands Pharmacy awareness campaign** – a symptoms awareness campaign will be running throughout April in over 500 Rowlands Pharmacies across the UK.

About Bowel Cancer

- If diagnosed early, bowel cancer could be cured in 9 out of 10 cases^{iv}
- Currently over half (56%) of bowel cancer patients are diagnosed with advanced cancer (stage 3 & 4)^v, and a quarter are diagnosed as emergency admissions^{vi}
- Increased awareness of symptoms is vital to ensure that patients are diagnosed at an early and curable stage.

Bowel Cancer Symptoms

If you have one or more of the following symptoms for three weeks or more go and see your GP:

- Bleeding from the bottom
- A persistent change in bowel habit
- A lump or severe pain in the abdomen
- Unexplained weight loss or tiredness

Beating Bowel Cancer is a national charity for bowel cancer patients, working to raise awareness of symptoms, promote early diagnosis and encourage open access to treatment choice for those affected by bowel cancer. Through our work we aim to save lives from this common cancer. For more information visit www.beatingbowelcancer.org.

Be Clear on Cancer

For more information on the Be Clear on Cancer Campaign visit nhs.uk/bowelcancer

In addition to the DH campaign 'Be Clear On Cancer', the Government is also working to provide better access to diagnostic tests. This includes expanding the current bowel screening programme to include men and women up to the age of 75 and further investment in flexible sigmoidoscopy screening to detect the early signs of bowel cancer.

ⁱ All figures are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 2028 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken online between 11th - 14th March 2011. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+).

ⁱⁱ Calculated using annual bowel cancer incidence of 36,800 and mortality of 16,250. Cancer Research statistics.

ⁱⁱⁱ 46% of people from the South West of England correctly identified two or more symptoms of bowel cancer, as did 40% of people from the East of England. All figures are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 2028 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken online between 11th - 14th March 2011. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+).

^{iv} Cancer Research CancerStats. Webpage:

http://info.cancerresearchuk.org/prod_consump/groups/cr_common/@nre/@sta/documents/generalcontent/crukmig_1000ast-2806.pdf



^v Colorectal Cancer Survival by Stage - NCIN Data Briefing. Webpage:
http://www.ncin.org.uk/publications/data_briefings/colorectal_cancer_survival_by_stage.aspx

^{vi} Routes to Diagnosis - NCIN Data Briefing. November 2010. Webpage:
http://www.ncin.org.uk/publications/data_briefings/routes_to_diagnosis.aspx