



PRESS RELEASE

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Colorectal Cancer Screening

One of the main thrusts in the Government's health strategy is prevention. Early detection of many conditions can be vital in resolving them and can save distress and lives. HM Government of Gibraltar is therefore pleased to announce the launch by the Gibraltar Health Authority of the Colorectal Cancer Screening programme.

Colorectal cancer, also known as Bowel Cancer, is Gibraltar's most commonly occurring cancer, as well as the third most frequent cause of cancer deaths.

Under this programme, all entitled persons between the ages of 60 and 74 living in Gibraltar will be invited for screening every two years. They will receive a test kit by post with which they will be able to collect samples themselves at home and send the samples to St. Bernard's Hospital laboratory for analysis.

The test kit detects faint traces of blood in the individual's stools, a sign of possible hidden cancer. Gibraltar's programme uses sophisticated Immunochemical test kits, which are more advanced than those used in many countries and significantly reduce the risk of error. Gibraltar's programme is also more advanced than others because it uses special patented collection papers which enable the user to have a "no-touch" approach for collecting samples.

Most people will have negative test results and this will be conveyed to them. If the test is positive, the individual will be referred for further detailed work up and treatment by a local consultant surgeon with specialist experience in colorectal cancer. To support this work, the GHA has invested heavily in new endoscopy instrumentation, as well as in specialised training of nursing and technical staff.

A Screening Administrator will organise and manage the procedures, and also assist the public with their enquiries and concerns. A dedicated software program has been written to manage client flows on a mass scale.

The Gibraltar programme will thus be a state-of-the-art design, superior to that of many other countries.

The Public Health department has produced two resources to help people use the test kits - first, an instruction leaflet, specially designed in both English and Spanish, to accompany the test kits and second, an instructional video, which will be available for download, showing people how to use the test kits, and created by professional animators.

In addition the department will also produce a public distribution leaflet, educating the public about colon cancer and how it can be prevented.

An infomercial has been produced for broadcast on TV to inform the public that the programme is being launched and urging them to take this important step to protect their health.

This ambitious screening programme adds to the programme in place against Breast Cancer and reinforces the Government's commitment to Health Promotion and the Prevention of Disease.