

NATIONAL BOWELCANCER SCREENING PROGRAM



Bruce explains how to do the bowel cancer screening test

Bruce Loo is a Noongar man who lives in Perth. His father's country is the south east coast of Western Australia and his mother's country is the wheat belt.

Bruce is passionate about supporting his community to live long and healthy lives. When it comes to cancer, and particularly bowel cancer, he has seen it affect his family and community in many ways. He knows that for culture to be passed down to the younger generations, people need to stay healthy and grow old. He emphasises the importance of doing the bowel screening test kit when it comes in the mail.

"The National Bowel Cancer Screening Program is a program which asks people to do tests on their poo to find out if they have any symptoms of bowel cancer", says Bruce.

"It's very important for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to do this test because even if you don't have any signs or any family history of bowel cancer, you could still have it. It's about early intervention. If people can pick it up, or doctors can pick it up early, then the chances of actually curing it and progressing onto a healthier, longer life is much better".

Bruce has completed the test kit a couple of times now, and encourages family members around his own age to do the test too – and not to throw the test kit in the bin when it arrives in the mail.

"The test kit comes in the mail. It's a box that says National Bowel Cancer Screening Program. And you need to actually open it up to have a look what's inside and there are a number of things. The two things that stick out most are the tubes. A blue and a red tube. And a little napkin that you place in the bottom of the basin so you can collect the sample. It's a pretty easy process. Putting the pad down, doing what you have to do, and using one of the little sample sticks, putting it in the fridge – make sure you close it all off so it doesn't affect anything else – and once you've done your second sample, you actually pack them all away, seal it all up. There's a prepaid envelope back to the National Bowel Screening Program and you just put it in the post".

"I've done it twice, so I'm in my third cycle I suppose you could say. I'm waiting for the test kit to come and I'll be doing it straight away. It's not a hard process. You just do it and send it off. If you have thrown it away you can ring up and get another kit sent out for free" he says.

Bruce acknowledges that some people in his community might not be comfortable doing the test, but he says that it is simple and easy, and worth it, given it can save your life.

"People get worried about lots of tests and the older we get the more tests we have to do. But it's all about making sure we're living healthy and staying healthy. If that means doing a simple test like a bowel cancer screening test then why not? We can't be afraid of addressing health issues".

"Because we want to see our kids, our grandkids and our great grandkids when we get older. So it's important that people actually do them", he continues.

"Bowel cancer is very treatable in its early stages, which is why the Australian Government send free bowel screening test kits to eligible people aged 50 to 74. If you aren't sure when you will be receiving your next kit, visit the cancerscreening.gov.au and use the calculator. You just put in your age and it tells you what year your next kit will be coming" said Bruce.



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To find out more about bowel cancer and the screening program, visit: cancerscreening.gov.au or call 1800 11 88 68