



## Dr Joshua Butt

MBBS, FRACP

**Endoscopy,  
Gastroenterology**

**Dr Joshua Butt's special interests include:**

- High quality gastroscopy and colonoscopy (including bowel cancer screening, management of positive FOBT, family history of bowel cancer and polyposis syndrome)
- Removal of large polyps (endoscopic mucosal resection)
- Treatment of Barrett's oesophagus
- Endoscopic ultrasound
- ERCP
- Balloon enteroscopy
- Capsule endoscopy

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# Why Screen for Bowel Cancer?

**Because bowel cancer screening saves lives – and it could save yours.**

by Dr Joshua Butt

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Bowel cancer is the **second deadliest cancer in Australia**, yet it is also one of the **most treatable – especially when detected early**. According to [Bowel Cancer Australia](#), **more than 90% of cases can be successfully treated** if found early. That's why screening is so important.

The challenge? **Early-stage bowel cancer often causes no symptoms**. That's where screening plays a critical role – it helps detect early cancer and can also detect some pre-cancerous polyps that can be excised before cancer develops, allowing for simple and highly effective treatment, often by endoscopic therapy and without the need for major surgery.

## How to Screen for Bowel Cancer

### **1. The Poo Test (Faecal Occult Blood Test – FOBT)**

This free test is designed for **people without symptoms**. It checks for tiny, invisible traces of blood from the lower gut in your stool, which may be caused by such things as **polyps, haemorrhoids, or early-stage cancer**. The test is quick, easy to do at home, and could save your life. We would recommend testing from age 45 onwards for most people in line with updated Australian Guidelines.

- Australians aged **50 to 74** automatically receive a **free test kit every two years** through the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program.
- Those aged **45 to 49** can now **request a free test kit** by registering online.
- If you're **between 40 and 45**, speak to your GP about whether early screening is right for you.

**Over 11% of bowel cancer cases occur in Australians under 50.** If you're aged 45 or older, take the test when it arrives. **Don't delay – early action makes a big difference.**

### **2. Colonoscopy**

If your poo test comes back positive, it doesn't necessarily mean you have cancer. But your doctor will recommend a **colonoscopy** to investigate further. Around 8% of all tests return a positive result, but only 3-4% of these positive tests will identify a cancer. However, around 50% of these positive tests will identify a significant pre-cancerous polyp that can be removed at a colonoscopy procedure.

A colonoscopy is a simple procedure that allows a specialist to examine your bowel. **Pre-cancerous polyps can be removed during the procedure**, often preventing cancer from developing at all. If cancer is found early, it may be treated **endoscopically**, at colonoscopy, thus avoiding major surgery and offering a **very high chance of cure**.

If you have **symptoms** like blood in your poo, changes in bowel habits, persistent abdominal pain, or unexplained weight loss, your doctor may recommend a colonoscopy instead of a FOBT.



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## Have a Family History of Bowel Cancer?

If bowel cancer runs in your family — especially if diagnosed at a young age (**before age 60**)— your risk is higher. Talk to your GP about whether you should have **colonoscopy as your screening test** or whether you should **start FOBT screening earlier** or having it more often. Being proactive can make all the difference.

## Screening Works — Let's Increase the Rate

Despite how treatable bowel cancer is when detected early, **only 43.5% of eligible Australians** complete the free screening test. That means too many people are being diagnosed too late.

Let's change that. **Talk to your GP. Do the test. Spread the word.** Screening can stop cancer before it starts — and **save lives**.

## ABOUT

**Dr Joshua Butt** is a gastroenterologist who performs procedures at John Fawkner Private Hospital. Appointments for a consultation or procedure can be organised through his main rooms at Gastronorth on 9468 9700.

For more information about Dr Butt, visit: <https://specialists.healthscope.com.au/specialist/joshua-butt-med0001214485> or <https://gastronorth.com.au/>

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