There could be several reasons for finding blood in a bowel motion that may not be related to bowel cancer, for example, bleeding from piles, menstrual blood, etc.

However, if blood is found, it’s important to speak to your doctor. Your doctor will talk with you about follow-up tests (such as colonoscopies) which check for bowel cancer, polyps or other causes of the positive FOBT result.

Remember, bowel cancer is 90% curable if found at an early stage. A number of tests are used to diagnose bowel cancer. Initially your doctor will give you a physical examination to feel if you have any abdominal swelling.

- **Colonoscopy**
  A colonoscopy is a test that allows a specialist to look at the inside of the bowel. It’s a day procedure. The test itself takes 20 to 30 minutes and is usually done in a hospital or day clinic.

  The day before the colonoscopy you’ll be asked to drink a special preparation to help empty the bowel. On the day of the procedure you may be given medicine that makes you feel drowsy, so it’s important that you don’t drive home after the test.

  The specialist will insert a narrow, flexible tube called a colonoscope into your back passage. The colonoscope allows the specialist to look for polyps or bowel cancers. Most polyps can be removed during the colonoscopy.

If you need to have a colonoscopy your doctor will explain the procedure and tell you about any risks. It’s rare for a colonoscopy to cause serious problems.

Victoria has established a designated provider model to ensure timely access to colonoscopy in public health services for National Bowel Cancer Screening Program participants with a positive FOBT result.

**Treatment**

If cancer is diagnosed, one of the following treatments may be recommended:

- **Surgery**
  The main treatment for early bowel cancer is surgery. The most common surgery for cancer that begins in the colon is a colectomy. The type of colectomy performed will depend on whether all or part of the colon needs to be removed.

- **Radiotherapy**
  Radiotherapy is often used before surgery for locally advanced rectal cancer and may be used in combination with chemotherapy to reduce the number and size of cancer cells.

- **Adjuvant treatment**
  Chemotherapy may be recommended after surgery for rectal or colon cancer. This aims to reduce the risk of the cancer returning.
Bowel Cancer Diagnostic Tests and Treatment

Treatment for advanced bowel cancer

• **Systemic treatment**
  Systemic treatment for advanced bowel cancer uses drugs that move through the bloodstream to reach cancer cells throughout the body. Systemic treatment can include chemotherapy and targeted therapies.

• **Surgery**
  You may be offered surgery to remove small secondary cancers if the cancer has spread to other areas of the body.