

Svit  **10** let

saves lives



**SLOVENIAN NATIONAL
COLORECTAL CANCER
SCREENING PROGRAMME**

It's time to think about yourself.

Colorectal cancer – a silent killer

In Slovenia, approximately 1,400 people develop colorectal cancer every year. Unfortunately, many people die as the disease is discovered too late. Colorectal cancer takes several years to develop in the body without showing any discernible disease symptoms and once the signs are evident, the disease is often already in an advanced stage which makes treatment very difficult.

Not only is colorectal cancer completely curable if discovered early enough, but we can also prevent it if we discover and remove precancerous lesions (polyps) in the intestinal mucosa in time.

The year-long experience of physicians in Slovenia and abroad shows that the burden of colorectal cancer can be strongly reduced with the **regular testing of faecal occult blood**. This testing enables the detection and removal of polyps and the discovery of the disease in its early stages when it is entirely curable.

In Slovenia the Svit Programme, intended for men and women aged between 50 and 74, has been running since 2009.

Your participation in the Svit Programme is covered by your mandatory health insurance since it is funded by the Health Insurance Institute of Slovenia.

The Programme has been running under the patronage of the Slovenian Ministry of Health and run by the National Institute of Public Health.

Regular testing can save your health and your life!

DON'T THROW AWAY THE INVITATION – GET YOURSELF TESTED!

COLORECTAL CANCER IS A VERY COMMON AND INSIDIOUS DISEASE WHICH CAN DEVELOP IN THE BODY FOR MANY YEARS WITHOUT ANY OBVIOUS SYMPTOMS.

Over the past few years, the Svit Programme has helped to detect polyps or the early stage of cancer in many people who had absolutely no idea they were ill. These people are the best witnesses to the importance of the Svit Programme, which has saved many lives already.

When I received the invitation to the Svit Programme, I hesitated for quite some time before I decided to participate. After doing the examination, my result was positive. Blood was found in my faeces! Today, I am healthy. I have two children and if I ignored the invitation to join the Svit Programme their lives would be completely different today. Even if the test is somewhat uncomfortable, you should really do it before it's too late.



Marjan Gospič

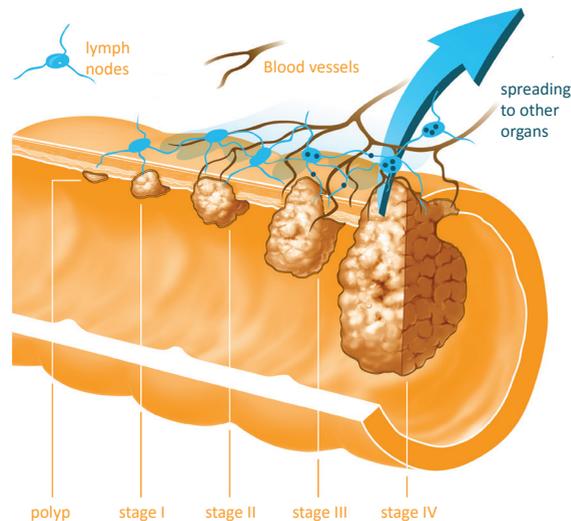


Your health deserves your attention. Luckily, I'm healthy, but I take regular tests in the Svit Programme because I want to stay healthy. If we know how to avoid an insidious danger, the only reasonable thing to do is avoid it!

Viki Grošelj, alpinist

Development of the disease

Colorectal cancer affects both men and women. This type of cancer most frequently develops from precancerous lesions (polyps) in the intestinal mucosa. The cells of a polyp, which are harmless by themselves, can modify over the years, resulting in the development of cancer. The disease advances slowly and without any obvious symptoms. When cancer is still restricted to the polyp, it can easily be removed and oncologic treatment is often not even necessary. But if the disease progresses and starts to spread in the blood vessels and lymphatics of the body, treatment can be very difficult and unfortunately not always successful. This is why large intestine lesions must be discovered as early as possible!



Colorectal cancer development stages

The following factors increase the risk of colorectal cancer: chronic inflammatory bowel disease, family affinity for polyp development, smoking, alcohol consumption, lack physical activity, unbalanced diet, obesity and overconsumption of red meat.

Who is most at risk

The risk of developing colorectal cancer increases with age. The majority of patients are older than 50 years but, unfortunately, younger people are not excluded.

Those particularly at risk are:

- the closest blood relatives of patients who contracted colorectal cancer before the age of 60 (if the father, mother, brother or sister were diagnosed with it),
- patients with chronic inflammatory bowel disease and
- patients who have already had polyps in their bowel.

SINCE ABNORMALITIES IN THE BODY DO NOT BLEED ALL THE TIME, IT IS VERY IMPORTANT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE SVIT PROGRAMME EVERY TWO YEARS. THIS INCREASES THE CHANCES OF FINDING POSSIBLE BLEEDING IN TIME



When my mother found out she had colorectal cancer, she immediately started intensive treatment which lasted two years. She also resorted to alternative medicine. However, it was too late. I lost my mom when I was just 20 years old. I believe that a more appropriate lifestyle and an earlier examination could have saved her life.



Katja Lihtenvalner

How to participate in the Svit Programme

1. Fill in and sign the Statement of voluntary participation and send it to the Svit Programme as soon as possible.
2. If you meet the criteria for participation in the screening programme, you will receive two sets for stool sample collection by post. In the privacy of your home, you will collect two samples following the instructions and send us the enclosed envelope by post.
3. We will analyse it in the Svit Programme laboratory and determine if your stool samples contain blood.
4. You will receive the test results by post within one week.

If we will find no blood in the stool samples, the results will be **negative**.

This means that there is probably nothing unusual going on in your colon – you will receive new invitation in two years and then again every two years until you reach the age of 74. Unfortunately, no test is entirely reliable; therefore, you still need to carefully monitor your body functions, especially the movement of your bowel.

The Svit Programme saved my life because the employees of the programme never gave up; I will always be grateful for that. The time stood still after the colonoscopy and the diagnosis of cancer came using silent steps. After that, everything happened extremely fast: the hospital, the surgery, the results. I still hardly comprehend what has happened. I guess I was destined to avoid the worst-case scenario. Do not throw away the invitation and save your life!

Marija Hrvatin



Which symptoms can mean that the intestine is experiencing abnormalities

- Visible blood in the stool
- Different bowel movements (very thin stool or constipation followed by diarrhoea, black stool),
- Severe or ongoing stomach pain and
- Unintentional loss of body weight.

IF SUCH PROBLEMS APPEAR, YOU SHOULD IMMEDIATELY CONSULT YOUR GENERAL PRACTITIONER.

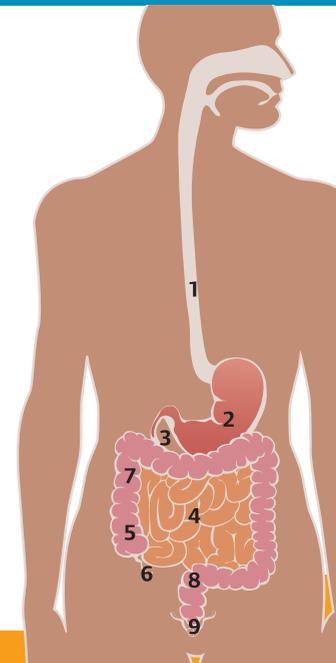
What if blood is found in your stool samples

If your test result is **positive** it means blood was found in your stool samples. This does not mean you have cancer – it only means there is blood in your colon and we must find out why.

A detailed large intestine examination called colonoscopy will clarify the cause of bleeding.

The most common cause of bleeding are polyps. Polyps are mucosal formations from which cancer can develop over time. Such polyps are considered time bombs and therefore need to be removed..

1 Oesophagus; 2 Stomach; 3 Duodenum;
4 Small intestine; 5 Caecum; 6 Appendix;
7 Large intestine; 8 Colon; 9 Anus



Colonoscopy

The experience of the Svit Programme have so far shown that blood is found in stool samples of approximately 6 % of all people who joined the Svit Programme. We advise everyone who receives a positive result of the faecal occult blood test to undergo a colonoscopy within the Svit Programme. A colonoscopy is a procedure in which a specialist uses a flexible finger-thick tube with a small camera to examine the large intestine, which must be completely emptied before the examination. If any polyps are found, most of them can be removed during the procedure without any pain for the patient. The doctor sends the tissue samples for a detailed microscopic examination.

If a colonoscopy is needed, you will first see your general practitioner. Together, you will make a plan of the examination, which is organized by the central unit of the Svit Programme for all its participants. You will call the Svit Programme call centre and set a date for examination in one of Svit's authorised colonoscopy centres, which are located throughout Slovenia. These diagnostic centres meet the strictest quality criteria for the performance of such examinations.

Colonoscopy is slightly unpleasant but painless for most people.



What if it's cancer?

If the detailed examination shows malignant intestinal changes, you will immediately start with the treatment, which will be monitored by top experts in the field of cancer treatment in cooperation with your general practitioner.

Thanks to modern medical findings and treatment methods, colorectal cancer is completely curable if it is found early enough. The sooner, the better!

BEFORE THE SVIT PROGRAMME, MERELY 12% OF COLORECTAL CANCER CASES WERE DISCOVERED IN ITS EARLY STAGES. THE SVIT PROGRAMME DISCOVERS 70% OF CANCER EARLY ENOUGH SO THAT ONCOLOGICAL TREATMENT IS NOT EVEN NEEDED.

DO NOT BE AFRAID OF THE WORLD INSIDE YOUR BODY! GET TESTED!

Regular faecal occult blood testing is a very important investment in your health. This is why it is very important to join the Svit Programme every time you are invited.

Colonoscopy showed that I had several large polyps in my colon. Without the screening programme, I would not have noticed anything and things would probably have ended badly. Thanks to this programme, I can now look to the future with a smile on my face. I hope my experience will encourage everyone who might hesitate to participate in the Svit Programme or to undergo colonoscopy. Do it and save your life!



Amalija Falež

What can we do to avoid cancer in the first place

- Regularly participate in the Svit programme and other screening programmes.
- Decide to lead a healthy lifestyle. Exercise a lot, maintain a normal body weight and eat healthy.
- Say no to smoking, harmful alcohol drinking and quit other bad habits.
- Listen to your body and visit your general practitioner if you have intestinal problems.
- Encourage others to do the same.



Thanks to the Svit Programme, I discovered I had cancer and was able to beat it. I recommend everyone who receives an invitation to respond to it! It doesn't take much effort to learn about your health. The preventive programme at hand is priceless.

Marija Lili Gričar

Ever since we have had the Svit Programme in Slovenia, many cases of cancer have been discovered in the early stages. This makes surgical procedures less difficult and the prognosis is much better. Therefore don't throw away the invitation, as it can save your life!

Senior dr. Franc Jelenc



About the national screening and early detection programme for colorectal cancer in Slovenia

The Svit Programme is called the nationwide screening programme, as it detects early precancerous changes and thus decreases the probability of developing colorectal cancer and increases the survival rate of cancer patients.

The programme was enabled by the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Slovenia and the Health Insurance Institute of Slovenia. The participation in the Svit Programme is covered by the mandatory health insurance. Invitations are sent to women and men aged 50 to 74. The Svit Programme screening test must be taken every two years until the age of 74.

The Svit Programme is a high-quality health service, which follows the recommendations of the European Commission and state-of-the-art findings as well as the experience of the most successful programmes for the early detection of colorectal cancer in the European Union and elsewhere in the world. The Svit Programme ensures high-quality services, from screening and diagnostic procedures to the treatment of cancer.

The invitations to the programme and faecal occult blood tests are sent out

every two years. The analyses of the stool samples are carried out in the Svit Programme central laboratory for the entire Slovenia. Participants and their general practitioners are regularly informed about the positive test results, while the negative test results are only sent to participants. Once a year, we inform general practitioners about their patients who participated in the programme.

Colonoscopies are performed by specially trained specialists in internal medicine – gastroenterologists and surgeons in specially organised centres throughout Slovenia. The removed tissues are examined by histopathologists. Treatment is carried out by specialists in various medical centres. The expert quality of the Svit Programme is controlled by the programme board, which is composed of renowned specialists with various fields of expertise. The operator of the Svit Programme is the National Institute of Public Health who implements, manages and coordinates the programme, and the medical staff from various Slovenian health institutions cooperate in the implementation of the programme

For additional information about the Svit Programme, you can:

- Call the Svit Programme Call Centre every day between 9:00 AM and 2:00 PM on 01 620 45 21;
- Write to us at Program Svit, p. p. 241, 1001 Ljubljana, e-mail us at svit@nijz.si or send a fax to 01 620 45 29;
- Visit the Svit Programme website www.program-svit.si/en/;
- Visit a Svit contact point in the preventive centre of your community health centre or
- Visit your general practitioner.

We can send the material about the Svit Programme in the Italian or Hungarian language at your request. Spoken materials and materials in the Slovenian sign language are available at www.program-svit.si where you can also find other interesting information..

We hope you have already decided to get tested in the Svit Programme. We kindly greet you in the hope you will make a wise decision about your health.

Svit Programme staff



Nacionalni inštitut
za **javno zdravje**



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