

A POSITIVE FOBT

The test is positive if it has detected traces of blood in at least one of the samples. A positive test does not necessarily mean you have bowel cancer.

However this is a possibility and examination of the bowel is always recommended, usually by colonoscopy.

If the colonoscopy is normal, have I wasted my time?

No. A clear colonoscopy means your chance of having cancer in the next ten years is very low.

Should I repeat the test to see if it is negative before deciding on a colonoscopy ?

No. A repeat test may be negative even if cancer is present

What are my chances of having a cancer with a positive FOBT?

If you have a positive FOBT, you are at least 20 times more likely to have cancer than if you were negative. The risk is about 5% for a cancer and 20% for an adenoma (an abnormal growth that may develop into cancer over time)

Will aspirin or similar medication affect the result?

No. Not for modern tests such as Insure.

Are there alternatives to colonoscopy?

No other test can fully replace colonoscopy. Medicare will only fund a virtual colonoscopy following an unsuccessful attempt at colonoscopy. If polyps are seen then colonoscopy will need to be performed to remove them for pathology assessment anyway.