Your ‘poo’ test explained:

Faecal Immunochemical Test (qFIT) for Occult (hidden) blood in Faecal (poo) Samples

What is being tested?

The faecal immunochemical test (qFIT) checks for blood in your poo. Normally, only a very small amount of blood is lost in the stomach or intestines (this is normal). This is less than you can see in your faeces and is not enough to be detected with this poo FIT test.

A positive FIT test will tell your doctor that you have bleeding occurring somewhere in your gastrointestinal tract. This blood loss could be due to ulcers, bulges, polyps, inflammatory bowel disease, diverticulitis , haemorrhoids (piles), swallowed blood from bleeding gums or nosebleeds, or it could be due to early bowel cancer. Anything that sticks out into the intestine, like a polyp or tumour, and is rubbed against by the poo as it passes through, has the potential to bleed now and again. Often this small amount of blood is the first, and sometimes the only, symptom of early bowel cancer.

Which patients are eligible for FIT?

The main use for the FIT test is to find early bowel cancer. Blood in the stool may be the only symptom of early bowel cancer. The signs and symptoms of bowel cancer are not always easy to see. In some patients, they may have abdominal pain or a swelling, bleeding from the bottom or ulceration or if they are age >60 years of age it might only be an abnormality in a blood test called iron deficiency anaemia.

Your GP will request you are seen by the hospital urgently as a “two week wait patient” and you will asked to do this poo test- FIT test. In other patients where the signs and symptoms are less clear, your GP may think you could have something happening in your bowel, of which bowel cancer could be possibility but wants to be more certain that this is the case. In these circumstances a FIT test will help them decide whether you need a referral.

- **How soon can I expect the results?**

GP’s will receive the results of the analysis within 7 working days from the date the test is sent to the laboratory. Your GP may then need to decide what is the next best step for you but if you have not heard within 10-14 days please contact the practice.

- **What do the results mean?**

If the Faecal occult blood test is negative: If your result is negative (Faecal occult blood (FIT) <10 µg Hb/g faeces) it is very unlikely you have bowel cancer (this test is so sensitive you can be 99% sure) You therefore do not need referral for suspected bowel cancer. If your GP is concerned that worrying symptoms persist they may do further tests or refer you for specialist advice.

If the Faecal occult blood test is positive: If your result is positive (Faecal occult blood (FIT) >10 µg Hb/g faeces), this does not necessarily 'prove' that you have cancer. There are other possible causes of bleeding and other follow-up procedures will need to be done to find the source of the bleeding. Your GP is likely to refer you for further investigations and this may be done urgently.

As you can see, its really important you complete your test and send back as advised as soon as you can, ideally within 7 days.

- **Where can I access further information and support?**

For more information about FIT please review the following website www.faecal-immunochemical-test.co.uk/

For more general information about laboratory tests: https://labtestsonline.org.uk/