

COLONOSCOPY – General Information

Please ensure you follow the bowel preparation instructions on page 4!

What is a colonoscopy?

This procedure involves a colonoscope – a long, thin flexible tube with a ‘video camera’ at the tip – being passed through the rectum into the colon. It allows the doctor to inspect the large intestine and also perform specialised procedures such as biopsies and removal of polyps.

Why have a colonoscopy?

Colonoscopy can detect inflamed tissue, ulcers and abnormal growths. The procedure is used to look for early signs of colorectal cancer and can help doctors diagnose unexplained changes in bowel habits, abdominal pain, bleeding from the bowel, low iron levels and weight loss. In some individuals with a family history, this may also be an appropriate test to check for precancerous polyps or bowel cancer.

This test is used to look for early signs of colorectal cancer and can help doctors diagnose unexplained changes in bowel habits, abdominal pain, bleeding from the bowel, low iron levels and weight loss.

How is a colonoscopy performed?

Sedation

Before the procedure a light anaesthetic (sedative) is usually given – you will not receive a full general anaesthetic. You may be slightly aware of what is going on in the room, but generally you won’t remember anything. The doctor and medical staff monitor your vital signs during the procedure and will attempt to make you as comfortable as possible. A colonoscopy usually takes between 20 and 45 minutes.

Examination of the bowel

Once sedated and lying in a comfortable position on your left side, the doctor inserts the flexible colonoscope (‘scope’) through the anus and slowly guides it into the colon. A small camera in the end of the scope transmits a video image to a monitor, allowing the doctor to carefully examine the intestinal lining. Once the scope has reached the opening to the small intestine, it is slowly withdrawn and the lining of the large intestine is carefully examined again.

Removal of polyps and biopsy

A polyp is a small tissue growth attached to the bowel wall. These are common in adults and are usually harmless, however, most colorectal cancer begins as a polyp so removing them early is an effective way to prevent cancer. If polyps are found during the procedure they will usually be removed using tiny tools passed through the scope. Small tissue samples or biopsies of the bowel may also be taken for examination. This allows the doctor to review it with a microscope for signs of disease.

What happens after colonoscopy?

Following the procedure you will remain in the recovery area for an hour or two until the sedation medication wears off. You will usually be given something light to eat and drink once you are awake.

When you wake up you may feel a little bloated. This is due to the air that was inserted during the procedure, and will pass over the next hour or so.

Very rarely you may pass a small amount of blood. This is often due to biopsies that have been taken and shouldn't concern you.

Because of the sedation given during the procedure, it is very important that you do not drive a car, travel on public transport alone, operate machinery, sign legal documents or drink alcohol on the same day after the test. It is strongly advised that a friend or relative take you home and stay with you.

Full recovery is expected by the next day. Discharge instructions should be carefully read and followed.

Are there any risks and side-effects?

Although complications can occur, they are rare when the procedure is performed by doctors who are specially trained in colonoscopy.

Occasionally, people may be intolerant to the bowel preparation medication and experience headaches and vomiting.

In Australia, very few people experience serious side-effects from colonoscopy and polypectomy (polyp removal). Rarely (one in 2000 cases), the bowel lining may be torn, and if this occurs you will require an operation. Perforation can also occur when polyps are removed, (one in 1000 cases) and would also require surgery.

The chance of complications depends on the exact type of procedure that is being performed and other factors including your general health.

After the procedure you may feel bloated, and if a biopsy has been taken or treatment performed there may be minor bleeding.

Reactions to the sedative are also possible, including severe allergic reactions (anaphylaxis). This is rare.

In a few cases, if the colonoscopy is not successfully completed it may need to be repeated or alternative investigations organised.

If you have any of the following symptoms in the hours or days after the colonoscopy you should contact the hospital or your doctor's rooms immediately:

- Severe abdominal pain
- Black, tarry motions
- Persistent bleeding from the anus
- Fever
- Other symptoms that cause you concern

PLEASE READ BOWEL PREPARATION INSTRUCTIONS ON PAGE 4 & 5!!

BOWEL PREPARATION – IF BOOKED ON A MONDAY

The week before your procedure obtain PicoPrep from the Chemist. You will not require a script for the PicoPrep.

Your colonoscopy will be on MONDAY

Please follow the instructions listed below:

PLEASE FOLLOW THESE INSTRUCTIONS FOR YOUR COLONOSCOPY ON A MONDAY	
<p>The Friday and Saturday before your colonoscopy please follow the “white diet” as outlined →→→→</p>	<p>Please follow the “white diet”</p> <p>Foods allowed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potatoes • Fish • Chicken • White Bread • Pasta • Dairy Products <p>Foods not allowed (anything with colour):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fruit • Vegetables (corn, peas) • Brown Rice • Muesli • Bran • Whole Grain Bread
<p>The Sunday (the day before your procedure) please follow these instructions outlined →→</p> <p><i>PLEASE ENSURE YOU AIM TO DRINK AT 3-4 LITRES OF FLUIDS THROUGHOUT THE DAY.</i></p> <p>(People on multiple medications and the elderly have been known to experience dizziness, (for example fainting) whilst completing the bowel preparation. It is advisable where possible, for those patients to have someone stay with them whilst they are completing the bowel preparation the day before the procedure)</p>	<p>Please DO NOT EAT ANY FOOD.</p> <p>You may have clear fluids only. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black Tea (no milk) • Black Coffee (no milk) • Water • Fruit Juice • Soft Drinks • Jelly • Clear Broth • Salty clear fluids such as strained chicken noodle soup or Bonox are recommended • DRINK PLENTY OF FLUIDS THROUGHOUT THE DAY
<p>1PM ON SUNDAY Commence PicoPrep (PicoPrep produces a watery stool and cleanses the bowel prior to examination. The first bowel motion should occur approximately 2-3 hours after administration.</p>	<p>Dissolve the entire contents of the 1st Sachet of PicoPrep into a glass of warm water. If preferred, chill the PicoPrep in fridge until required to drink. Drink contents of the glass followed by a glass of water. Continue drinking clear fluids, at least a glass per hour.</p>
<p>4PM ON SUNDAY</p>	<p>Repeat the steps above with the 2nd sachet of PicoPrep and continue drinking clear fluids.</p>
<p>7PM ON SUNDAY</p>	<p>Repeat the steps above with the 3rd sachet of PicoPrep and continue drinking clear fluids.</p>
<p>On the morning of your Colonoscopy, if you are on heart, epileptic, prednisone or cortisone tablets, you should take them at your usual time with a sip of water.</p>	