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What is a Colonoscopy?

A colonoscopy is a procedure where a flexible tube with a camera on the tip is passed through the rectum to directly examine the colon (or large bowel). It allows the Gastroenterologist to examine these areas carefully, as well as perform biopsies or remove polyps.

Why am I having this procedure?

Your doctor may recommend a colonoscopy for investigation of:

- Rectal bleeding
- Anaemia
- Diarrhoea or constipation
- Abdominal pain
- Weight loss
- Family history of bowel cancer

How do I prepare for a colonoscopy

For a successful colonoscopy, it is important that the bowel is clean. This is achieved by using bowel preparation (specialised laxative kit), modifying your diet and having plenty of clear fluids. Your Gastroenterologist will provide you with specific instructions for the bowel preparation and this can be purchased from your local pharmacy. If the bowel is not sufficiently clean, important abnormalities such as polyps could be missed, or a repeat procedure may be required.

An empty stomach is essential:

- **You should have nothing solid to eat in the 6 hours leading up to your arrival time.** You may drink 'clear fluids' only (e.g. water, cordial, clear fruit juice, black tea or coffee WITHOUT milk, soft drinks) until 2 hours prior to your arrival.
- After that you must remain strictly nil by mouth, apart from a sip of water to take important regular medications, but NOT diabetic or blood thinning medications.

This document provides general information only and does not replace personalised advice from your treating team. It is not a diagnosis, treatment plan, or informed consent discussion, and reading it does not create a doctor-patient relationship. Preparation and medication instructions (including blood thinners/diabetes medicines and pregnancy considerations) may differ between patients—follow the directions provided to you by your clinician and facility. While care is taken to keep information accurate, it may be incomplete or change over time; reliance is at your own risk. To the extent permitted by law, liability is limited for any loss or harm arising from use of or reliance on this document. If you develop severe symptoms or are concerned after a procedure, seek urgent medical care.

Special Considerations

- People with diabetes, heart valve disease, cardiac pacemakers, on weight loss drugs (e.g. Ozempic, Wegovy, Mounjaro, Trulicity, Saxenda), or on blood thinning medication e.g. Apixaban, Rivaroxaban, Dabigatran, Warfarin, Clopidogrel, Ticagrelor, Prasugrel (except Aspirin), may require special arrangements, which should be discussed with your Gastroenterologist.

What happens on the day of the procedure?

- Arrive at the Endoscopy Unit at the time you are advised. Do not bring any valuables.
- You will be admitted by a nurse. After which, your Gastroenterologist and the Anaesthetist will speak with you.
- Deep sedation is administered by an Anaesthetist prior to the procedure so that you remain comfortable.
- The procedure time generally takes around 30-45 minutes.

What happens after the procedure?

- After the procedure, you will be taken to the recovery area until the sedation wears off.
- Your Gastroenterologist will briefly inform you of the findings of your procedure and necessary, a follow-up appointment will be organised to discuss the results in detail.
- Due to the sedation, within the first 24 hours of the procedure, you must AVOID driving, travel alone on public transport or taxi/uber, operate machinery, sign legal documents or consume alcohol. An adult must accompany you home after the procedure and stay with you overnight.
- After 24 hours, you can return to work and resume normal activities.

Potential risks

Although complications can occur with any endoscopic procedure, these are very uncommon after diagnostic colonoscopy.

- Bloating, abdominal discomfort are common and usually resolve within an hour.
- More serious complications are rare, including significant bleeding, injury to the spleen, severe infection or perforation. Surgery may be required to repair a perforation.
- While colonoscopy is an accurate way to examine the colon, there is small chance that significant lesions may be missed.
- Like all medical procedures, there is a remote chance that a significant complication can result in death, however this is extremely rare.

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