

Colonoscopy Information brochure

What is colonoscopy?

- Colonoscopy involves a colonoscope (scope) – a narrow tube with a ‘video camera’ at the tip – being passed through your anus/bottom into your bowel.
- It is the best way to check for the cause of bleeding and remove polyps.
- A polyp is a small growth attached to the bowel wall. These are common in adults and are usually harmless, but some can develop into cancer.
- Removing polyps can help to prevent cancer. If the doctor finds polyps during the procedure, they will usually remove them.
- The doctor may also take small samples of the bowel so they can review it with a microscope for signs of disease.
- You will not feel anything if a polyp or sample is removed.

How do I prepare for colonoscopy?

If you have any health problems or take regular medicine talk to your doctor before you start your bowel preparation. They may tell you to stop taking some medicines for a few days before your colonoscopy.

Preparation of your bowel involves:

1. Diet – your doctor will tell you what you can or can’t eat in the days before your colonoscopy.
2. Medicine – you will be given a bowel preparation kit with instructions on how to use it. You will also take medicine which will make you go to the toilet to empty your bowel.
3. Fluids – your doctor will give you instructions for staying hydrated.

How is colonoscopy performed?

First, you will be given a light sedative to make you feel sleepy and comfortable. While you are lying down, the doctor will slowly insert a flexible scope through your bottom and into your bowel. The scope has a small camera at the end which will let your doctor look at the wall of your bowel.

The procedure will take about 20 to 45 minutes.

What happens after colonoscopy?

After the procedure you will be given something to eat and drink. When you wake up you may feel a little bloated, but this will only last for about an hour. Very rarely you might pass a small amount of blood, but this is normal.

You can generally go home the same day as the procedure.

Because of the sedation, you should not do any of these things for the 24 hours after your colonoscopy:

- Drive a car;
- Travel alone;
- Use machinery;
- Sign legal papers; or
- Drink alcohol.

A friend or family member will need to take you home and stay with you for 24 hours after your colonoscopy. You should feel better by the next day.

How accurate is a colonoscopy?

Colonoscopy is very accurate, and it is the best way to investigate your signs and symptoms. There is still a small chance something could be missed during your procedure. Even if no cancer or polyps are found, you should keep screening and the best way is with the free National Bowel Cancer Screening Program test kits.

Are there any risks or side-effects?

There might be some side effects, but they are not common -these include bleeding, infection, missed lesions and polyps, and very rarely perforation. You may have a headache or vomiting from the bowel preparation. You might have a reaction to the sedation but this is rare. Very rarely, some people will need to go back into hospital.

You should talk to your doctor about these risks before your colonoscopy.

What are my options?

You can choose to have your colonoscopy in a public or private hospital or clinic. If it is a public facility, it will be free of charge. If it is a private facility, you may have to pay depending on your private health insurance. You will need to pay for the bowel preparation.

Who can I contact if I have any questions?

Please note this brochure is provided as a guide and your doctor should provide you with more information. If you have any questions, please talk to your doctor before your colonoscopy.

Further information about the program can be found at www.health.gov.au/nbcsp



For information in your language, phone the Translating and Interpreting Service: **13 14 50** or visit www.health.gov.au/nbcsp-translations