

COLONOSCOPY

Patient Information Leaflet



COLONOSCOPY

You have been advised by your consultant to have a colonoscopy. The following information will help you make an informed decision in agreeing to the examination. It is important you read the information fully.

The examination you will be having is called a colonoscopy, also known as an endoscopy. This is an examination of the lining of the large bowel (colon) to establish whether there is any disease present. This test also allows us to take tissue samples (biopsy) for analysis if necessary.

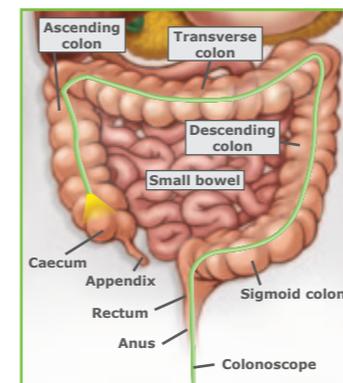
The instrument is called a colonoscope (endoscope); a flexible tube about the thickness of your index finger. The colonoscope has a light and a camera on the end. The camera sends out pictures of the lining of your large bowel to a screen where the consultant is able to look at them.

A colonoscopy may be advised for several reasons including:-

- Change in bowel habit
- Abdominal pain
- Weight loss
- Anaemia
- Removal of polyps
- Blood in the stools or passing black stools
- To find out more about an abnormality seen on x-ray
- As a follow up inspection of a previously known bowel disease
- Screening in families with a strong history of bowel cancer

This examination may help your consultant to find the cause of your symptoms. The results will help to decide on the best treatment for the problem or whether further tests or examinations are needed.

Colonoscopy is commonly performed and generally a safe procedure. For most people, the benefits in terms of having a clear diagnosis are much greater



than the disadvantages. However, there is some element of risk and it is important that you know these before you decide to go ahead with the test.

These include:-

- The bowel preparation may make you feel a little sick and will give you watery diarrhoea. This is normal and expected so please continue to take the preparation as instructed. It is important to drink plenty of clear fluids to stay hydrated.
- There is a risk that small abnormalities may be missed, although this is very unlikely.
- Bleeding may occur at the site of biopsy or polyp removal, if this is required, and invariably stops on its own. Very rarely this could result in you being admitted to hospital.
- A tear or perforation in the lining of the bowel. Globally, overall, this happens in approximately 1 in 1,000 patients although, the risk is higher following biopsy or polyp removal (approximately 1 in 500). If this happens, some cases may be treated with antibiotics and intravenous fluids, others may require surgery to repair the perforation.
- Sedation itself can occasionally cause problems with breathing, heart rate and blood pressure, but this often lasts for only a short time. Careful monitoring by our fully trained nursing staff ensures that any potential problems can be identified and treated rapidly. Older patients and those with major health problems (such as significant breathing difficulties) may be at higher risk.
- Heart attack or stroke. These are very rare and are more likely to affect elderly patients or patients already at risk of this.

In some cases, depending on symptoms present and the condition being investigated, there may be alternatives to having a colonoscopy. These may include:

- A CT scan with or without bowel preparation, also called a 'virtual colonoscopy' or 'CT colonography'
- A barium enema

These are not always as informative and have the added disadvantage that tissue samples cannot be taken. The alternatives will have to be discussed with your consultant who has recommended the investigations.

Following your consultation, the secretary will organise a date for you to be admitted as a day case to the Hampshire Clinic for your colonoscopy. You will receive sedation prior to the colonoscopy to help you relax, together with painkillers. These are given via a needle in your hand or arm and will make you drowsy and relaxed, but is not a general anaesthetic. You may be able to hear clearly and follow simple instructions during the procedure. You may not remember much about the procedure however, people often respond differently to the sedation; some are very drowsy and remember little of the whole event whilst others remain more alert. You are not able to drive or operate heavy machinery for 24 hours following the sedation. You will be required to have a responsible adult escort you home and remain with you for the rest of the day and night. You are advised not to drink alcohol for 24 hours following sedation, to be totally responsible for young children or to sign legal documents.

To allow a clear view of the bowel lining, the large bowel, which normally contains faeces, must be completely empty and clean. You will be given information on how to take the bowel preparation (Picolax) and you are advised to follow these instructions carefully.

On admission to the Hampshire Clinic you will be escorted to your room where you will be until taken for your colonoscopy. The nurses will admit you and you will be provided with a gown to change into prior to the procedure.

The Examination

For your colonoscopy you will be taken on your bed to the Endoscopy Suite where you will have opportunity to ask your consultant further questions. You will be made comfortable on a bed and a needle inserted into the back of your hand or arm.

You will be asked to lie on your left side with your knees bent. The Endoscopy nurse will stay with you and monitor your blood pressure and oxygen levels throughout the test. You will be given some intravenous pain relief (usually Pethidine) and sedation (Midazolam) through the small needle in your hand or arm. The consultant will usually perform a brief internal examination with a gloved finger before inserting the flexible tube into your back passage (anus). The tube has to be carefully manoeuvred around the length of the large bowel. There are some naturally occurring bends and negotiating these may be uncomfortable at times. You may need to change position to allow the tube to move around the bowel. Air is passed via the tube into the bowel to help see the lining. This may make you feel bloated and cause some mild wind pains. You may feel as though you want to go to the toilet and you will need to pass wind. This is normal and there is no need to feel embarrassed.

If necessary, small tissue samples called biopsies may be taken painlessly and sent to the laboratory for examination. A polyp is an abnormal projection of tissue on the lining of the bowel (like a skin tag). Some polyps are attached to the intestinal wall by a stalk and look like a mushroom, whereas others are flat without a stalk. If a polyp is found, or you are already known to have polyps, it is usually removed by the consultant at colonoscopy, depending on its size and location, as it may grow and cause problems later. Alternatively, the consultant may take some samples for further investigation. Polypectomy involves using a high frequency electric current to remove or destroy the polyp. The is all done via the colonoscope and you will be unaware of it.

The examination normally takes approximately 40 minutes, sometimes longer, depending on any treatment required. At the end of the procedure the colonoscope is gently removed along with as much air as possible. Minor side effects such as retained wind and stomach soreness are quite common and will settle after a few hours. Please be aware that small internal photographs may be taken during the examination and retained in your notes for future information.

It may be that your consultant, at the time of your procedure, may elect to treat piles (haemorrhoids) if they are present and causing symptoms. This will be discussed with you prior to your endoscopy. It is straightforward to treat haemorrhoids at the time of the procedure with banding and/or injection. At the end of the procedure tiny rubber

bands are placed over the haemorrhoids cutting off the blood supply. The haemorrhoids and bands will then fall off in a few days and the wounds usually heal within a couple of weeks. The procedure sometimes produces mild discomfort and bleeding and may need to be repeated for a full effect. Injection can also be used to help shrivel the haemorrhoids.

After the Colonoscopy

Once your colonoscopy is completed you will need to rest and recover until fully awake. You will be transferred back to your room and once you have recovered from the initial effects of the sedation you will be offered a drink and something to eat. You should not have any pain.

Before you are discharged from the Hampshire Clinic any findings and follow up care will be explained to you and you will receive a follow up appointment for approximately ten days. As you have received sedation, this may cause memory loss and you may not remember what is said to you. However, any findings will be discussed at your follow up appointment or in some cases your consultant will write you a letter. Your GP will be informed of the results. If you require a prescription this will be organised for you, or you will be asked to attend your GP. Depending on your symptoms and findings, further investigations or repeat colonoscopy may be necessary. You can eat and drink normally after your colonoscopy.

On discharge from the Hampshire Clinic

Most people experience no problems following a colonoscopy. You may experience some mild to moderate wind pains and may need to pass wind quite naturally. The feeling will pass and needs no intervention. A little bleeding may occur if polyps have been removed or biopsies taken but this should stop within 24 hours.

In the unlikely event that you should experience severe abdominal pain or excessive bleeding, please contact Enbourne Ward at the Hampshire Clinic, your consultant secretary, your GP or attend the Accident and Emergency Department immediately for assessment. Please inform them that you have had a colonoscopy.

Enbourne Ward: 01256 357111
Accident and Emergency, Basingstoke and North Hampshire Hospital:
01256 4732020 ext 4700

Infection Control and prevention

Infections in hospital are worrying to everyone. We need your help to reduce the risk of infection. By working as a team, healthcare workers, patients and visitors can all make a difference. We can reduce the risk. Infection control is important to us all, at home and especially in hospital. We need to be more careful in hospital as patients are vulnerable. They are more vulnerable due to their illness, treatment, age or a combination of factors.

Hand washing

The single most important way of reducing infection is by hand washing. Bacteria and viruses, which cause infections, can be carried by hands and passed person to person or from things to people.

Please clean your hands regularly. It is especially important:-

- After using the toilet or bathroom
- Before eating (both snacks and meals)
- Between entering and leaving any ward or department

You may use soap and water, or if your hands are visibly clean you may use alcohol gel instead. You will find alcohol gel throughout the Hampshire Clinic. Patients should feel they can ask a nurse or doctor if they have cleaned their hands before an examination.

Advice

- If you are unwell, coughing or sneezing, cold or flu like symptoms, please cancel your admission.
- If you have diarrhoea or vomiting three days before admission, please contact the nursing staff.
- Do not walk about in bare feet, wear slippers or shoes.
- Use disposable flannels.
- Use liquid soap.
- Dressings on wounds and drip sites are designed to keep them clean and dry, do not touch them.

Please contact your insurance company with the dates, the expected length of your stay, details of your operation including the specific codes related to this as advised by the secretary. You are advised at all times to contact your insurance company prior to any admission, treatment, investigation or consultation to gain pre-authorisation. Your care and treatment with Basingstoke Colorectal is private and it is the responsibility of the patient to ensure insurance cover is authorised. If you require any assistance with this please contact us.

You will typically receive an appointment card on discharge or in the post for a routine follow up appointment with the consultant for approximately ten days following your colonoscopy.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact us on the details provided.

ALL CORRESPONDENCE AND APPOINTMENTS

The Hampshire Clinic Basing Road Basingstoke Hampshire RG24 7AL
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E: info@basingstokecolorectal.co.uk W: www.basingstokecolorectal.co.uk