

Colonoscopy Overview and Additional Procedure Information

Please read prior to the procedure.

What is a Colonoscopy?

A colonoscopy is a day-case procedure in which the inside of the large intestine (colon and rectum) is examined. A colonoscopy is commonly used to evaluate gastrointestinal symptoms, such as rectal and intestinal bleeding, or changes in bowel habit. Colonoscopy is also advised in individuals without symptoms to check for colorectal polyps or cancer. A screening colonoscopy is recommended for anyone aged 50 years or older, and persons with a family history of colon polyps or cancer should be screened at an age 10 years younger than it was diagnosed in the family member.

What Happens Before a Colonoscopy?

To complete a successful colonoscopy, the bowel must be clean so that the physician can clearly view the inside of the colon. It is very important that you read and follow all the instructions for your bowel preparation well before the procedure. Without proper preparation, the colonoscopy will not be successful and may have to be repeated. You may experience some irritation of the skin around the anus due to passage of liquid stools.

This can be eased by:

- Applying a thin layer of Vaseline around the anus before drinking the PicoPrep, and after each bowel movement
- Wiping with cotton wool soaked in warm water, rather than using toilet paper. Non-scented disposable wet wipes can also be used. Dry by dabbing with a soft towel or cloth.
- Sit in a bath filled with warm water, dab dry with a towel and apply Vaseline.

What Happens During a Colonoscopy?

The doctor will insert a long flexible instrument into the rectum and will advance to the caecum (beginning of the colon). If necessary pieces of tissue (biopsy) can be removed for testing, and polyps can be identified and removed. The colonoscopy may allow accurate diagnosis and treatment of colorectal problems, without the need for a major operation. The colonoscopy is disinfected between procedures. You will have an intravenous line inserted (a "drip") and will be lying on your left side. A sedative- and a pain relieving drug will be administered to make you more relaxed during the procedure. Your vital signs are monitored, and you will be breathing oxygen to maintain a normal blood oxygen concentration. The procedure lasts between 20 and 40 minutes on average, and you will be allowed to rest until fully awake. You may feel slightly bloated and uncomfortable after the procedure, due to air inserted into your colon to improve visualization.

What Happens After a Colonoscopy?

You will remain in a recovery room for observation until you are ready for discharge.

You may feel some cramping or a sensation of having gas, but this soon passes.

A responsible adult must drive you home. Avoid driving and operating machinery for 24 hours.

Avoid alcohol and take a course of QuatroFlora capsules to restore intestinal flora .

Unless otherwise directed you may resume your normal diet after the colonoscopy.

Wait until the day after the procedure before resuming normal activities e.g. exercise.

If polyps were removed or biopsies taken, avoid using aspirin and anti-inflammatory drugs for 2 weeks.

Paracetamol e.g. Panado, Tylenol etc may be used.

If you are on anti-coagulants e.g. Warfarin or Plavix, your physician will advise when it is safe for you to restart the medication.

If a biopsy was taken or a polyp removed, mild rectal bleeding may be noted for 1-2 days after the procedure.

If heavier bleeding is encountered e.g. clots of blood, or if you have severe abdominal pain, this must be reported immediately. If you are unable to contact the physician, report to the emergency department of the clinic or hospital where the procedure was performed.