

WHAT IS A COLONOSCOPY?

A colonoscopy is a procedure that uses a flexible tube, known as a colonoscope. It is inserted into your anus and through the rectum. It lets your doctor see the inside of your large bowel (the colon). The tube transmits images to a screen where signs of medical conditions can be seen.

When is a colonoscopy recommended?

A colonoscopy may be used to investigate many problems such as:

- to identify the cause of gut-related problems such as abdominal pain, bleeding from anus or change in bowel habits.
- if they have had a positive bowel cancer screening test (poo test)
- if they have a high risk of illness due to chronic bowel disease or a family history of bowel disease such as bowel cancer
- to identify the cause of unexplained weight loss
- following a recommendation from a previous colonoscopy

How do I prepare for a colonoscopy?

- Bowel preparation is not pleasant, but it is essential for an accurate and safe colonoscopy.
- If you need to have a colonoscopy, you will be given detailed instructions on what you need to do.

A complete bowel preparation involves:

- modifying your diet
- increasing your fluid intake
- taking a bowel preparation (a strong laxative)

How will I need to change my diet?

You will be given clear instruction on what you can and cannot eat before the procedure. This may start several days before hand. You will be given specific instructions on the type and amounts of fluids to have leading up to your examination.

It is important to drink only clear fluids on the day before, and to not eat solid foods or dairy products like milk. You will be allowed to have fluids like:

- water
- clear fruit juice (apple, white grape, white cranberry)
- tea or coffee (no milk)
- clear carbonated drinks
- clear soup

You will be asked not to have anything further to eat or drink for a period of time before your procedure - this will be included in the bowel preparation instructions you received.



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What is bowel preparation?

We will recommend the right bowel preparation medicine for you. The bowel preparation will cause diarrhoea so it should be done while at home where you can easily access the toilet.

The area around the anus may become irritated by diarrhoea. Showering, and using moist wipes instead of toilet paper, may help.

Are there any side effects from bowel preparation?

You might have some minor side effects from the bowel preparation, including nausea and bloating. If you experience any of this, take a short break and then start taking the bowel preparation again.

Contact us if you have any serious side effects or if you cannot finish the bowel preparation.

Should I keep taking my regular medications?

If you take regular medicines, talk to your doctor well before you start taking the bowel preparation. Some medicines should be taken as normal, and some can be delayed. It is particularly important to talk to Dr Seleem's rooms if you take blood-thinning medicines, anti-arthritis medication or iron tablets.

What happens during the procedure and straight after?

The colonoscopy lasts for between 25 to 45 minutes. Most people have a mild anaesthetic or sedation to minimise any pain or discomfort. The sedation also means you may remember very little of the procedure or nothing at all.

During the procedure

You will be positioned on your left side and given sedation before the colonoscope is put into your colon. The colonoscope is inserted at the end of your large intestine. It is then withdrawn slowly so the lining of the colon can be examined again. Air is also pumped into the colon to help the doctor examine the lining carefully. During the procedure, polyps (small tissue growths that might develop into cancer) may be taken and sent to the laboratory to determine what type of disease is present.

The procedure is usually performed as day surgery. You will be monitored in recovery for an hour or two after the procedure until your sedation wears off.

After the procedure

Afterwards, you may feel drowsy, and will need to arrange for somebody to help you get home. It is also recommended that you arrange to have someone stay with you the night after your colonoscopy.



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Straight after the sedation you should not:

- drive a car
- travel on public transport alone
- operate machinery
- sign legal documents
- drink alcohol

You should expect to make a full recovery the next day.

You will be given a brief report on findings. You probably won't get your full results and further advice until later at a follow-up appointment.

Are there any risks or side effects?

Complications during or following a colonoscopy are rare. However, the potential risks of the procedure include:

- bleeding
- infection
- intestinal perforation (when a small tear occurs in the bowel wall)

The combination of bowel preparation and sedation may cause tiredness and weakness following the procedure. This will pass if you rest and drinking plenty of fluids.

When should I see my doctor?

Again, please ensure you make arrangements for someone to drive you home after the procedure. Notify Dr Seleem's rooms at Launceston Endoscopy Clinic on 03 6709 8012 during working hours or the hospital Emergency Department straight away if you have:

- severe ongoing abdominal pain, or fever
- black tarry motions or bleeding from the back passage

Please note that this document is intended to provide a general overview of an endoscopic procedure. It is not intended to serve as a substitute for a consultation or professional medical care.



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