

Colonoscopy Information Guide

Your doctor has determined that you should undergo a procedure called a **Colonoscopy** on the following date to enable further evaluation of your condition:

APPOINTMENT DATE: / / **AT** **AM / PM**

This information guide has been prepared to help you understand the procedure. It includes answers to questions most frequently asked by patients. Please read it carefully. Please feel free to ask your doctor any additional questions before you undertake the procedure.

IMPORTANT

- You must organise a driver and someone to look after you post procedure. The sedatives used for this procedure will mean that you are **LEGALLY** under the influence of a mind altering drug for a period of 12 hours. It is best not to work on the day of the examination.
- You must follow the bowel preparation instructions provided to you prior to your procedure.

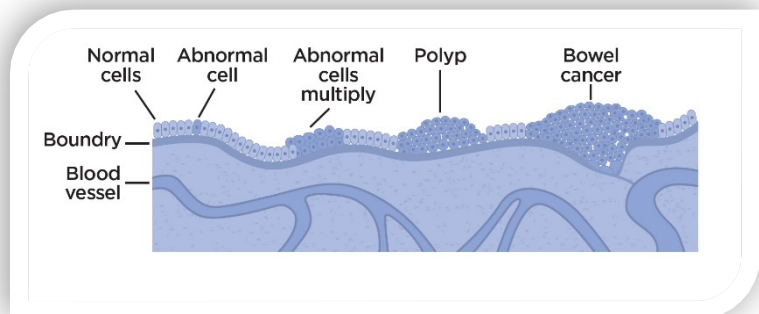
What is a colonoscopy?

This procedure involves a colonoscope – a long, thin flexible tube with a ‘video camera’ at the tip – being passed through the rectum into the colon. It allows the doctor to inspect the large intestine and also perform specialised procedures such as taking small tissue samples (biopsies) and removing polyps (benign wart-like growths) if necessary.

Why have a colonoscopy?

Colonoscopy can detect inflamed tissue, ulcers and abnormal growths. The procedure is used to look for early signs of colorectal cancer and can help doctors diagnose unexplained changes in bowel habits, abdominal pain, bleeding from the bowel and weight loss. In some individuals with a family history, this may also be an appropriate test to check for bowel cancer.

As cancer of the large bowel can arise from pre-existing polyps it is recommended that all polyps found at the time of colonoscopy be removed. Most polyps can be removed (i.e. Polypectomy) during your colonoscopy. If you have any queries or reservations about this, please discuss this with your doctor prior to being sedated.



How is a colonoscopy performed?

A colonoscopy is performed under sedation, as a day only procedure. Once anaesthetic sedation is given, the doctor inserts the flexible colonoscope (‘scope’) through the anus and slowly guides it into the colon. A small camera in the end of the scope transmits a video image to a monitor, allowing the doctor to carefully examine the intestinal lining.

Once the scope has reached the opening to the small intestine, it is slowly withdrawn and the lining of the large intestine is carefully examined again. Depending on the findings, biopsies may be taken and sent to pathology. The doctor and medical staff monitor your vital signs during the procedure. The procedure itself takes about 20 to 30 minutes.



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How do I prepare for a colonoscopy?

For a successful colonoscopy, it is essential to empty the bowel thoroughly of all waste material, which can be done by taking bowel preparation medication (see below). Failure to do this prior to colonoscopy may mean the doctor won't be able to see important markers, or you may have to return for another repeat procedure.

A complete bowel preparation consists of:

1. Modifying your diet

This may involve following a special low residue diet for several days prior to the colonoscopy.

2. Taking a bowel preparation medication

There are many effective bowel preparations (i.e. a laxative medication that causes diarrhoea and empties the colon) available, however depending on your medical condition, the doctor will recommend the right one for you. Our Centre will provide the specific preparation medication and complete instructions on how to take it, prior to your procedure.

3. Increasing your fluid intake

Specific preparation instructions are designed for you and will be provided to you by the Centre, however you're going to lose a lot of fluid as your bowels are flushed clean. Even mild dehydration can cause uncomfortable symptoms, including dizziness and headache, so it's important to drink plenty of clear liquids before, during, and after the preparation process.

What do I do before the procedure?

- Complete and return all pre-admission paperwork well prior to your scheduled appointment; this includes informing the Centre of all medical conditions and any medications or supplements taken regularly;
- Familiarise yourself with the patient information brochure provided to you prior to your procedure. This provides all the necessary details regarding the hospital facility and what to bring on the day;
- You should also follow the detailed preparation instructions provided prior to your procedure. This includes **NOT DRINKING ANY FLUIDS FOR 2 HOURS** prior to your appointment time;
- Prescribed medications should be taken as per normal with a small sip of water up to 2 hours prior to your procedure. **DO NOT** take any medication within **2 HOURS** of arriving for your procedure; and
- Arrive at the Centre dressed in comfortable, loose fitting clothing (e.g. shirt and pants or shirt and skirt etc.) Further information is provided in the patient information brochure.

IMPORTANT - Because of the sedation given, you are **NOT** legally allowed to drive for the rest of the day and **MUST** be accompanied home. You must **NOT** drive a car, travel via taxi or on public transport alone, operate machinery, sign legal documents, or drink alcohol on the same day after the procedure. You are required to have a friend or relative take you home and stay with you. Full recovery is expected by the next day.

It is anticipated that you will be at the Southern Endoscopy Centre for approximately **2-3 hours**.

Any special instructions (if any) are provided below:

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What are the possible complications and associated risks?

Although complications can occur in any procedure, complications arising from a colonoscopy are uncommon and it is usually simple and safe. The chance of complications depends on the exact type of procedure that is being performed and other factors including your general health. Most surveys report complications of 1 in 1,000 examinations or less.

Perforation (making a hole in the bowel) or major bleeding from the bowel is rare, but if it occurs, you may require surgery. When operations such as removal of polyps are carried out at the time of the examination, there is a slightly higher risk of perforation or bleeding from the removed site. If there is a suspicion of a perforation after your procedure the doctor may decide to transfer you to hospital for further care. If an ambulance is required the associated fees will be payable by you or your health fund.

Extremely rarely, individual patients may also inhale some fluid that may still be present in the stomach whilst sedated (resulting in pneumonia).

Complications that can also occur include an intolerance of the bowel preparation or reaction to sedatives used. Complications of sedation are uncommon. If you wish to have full details of rare complications explained to you in more detail please speak to your doctor prior to the procedure.

What happens after the colonoscopy?

Following the procedure, you will remain in recovery for at least an hour. You will usually be given something light to eat and drink once you are awake. The doctor will then provide you with a brief overview of your results and let you know if you require any follow up appointment at our Centre or with your local GP.

It is very important that you do not try and get out of bed until instructed to do so by nursing staff. You will still be affected by the sedation even after you think it has worn off. Very rarely you may pass a small amount of blood following the procedure.

Following your discharge and in the unlikely event that experience any of the following symptoms in the hours or days after the procedure, you should contact our Centre or your GP's rooms immediately:

- Severe abdominal pain;
- Black, tarry motions;
- Persistent bleeding from the anus (more than a cup full);
- Fever; or
- Other symptoms that cause you concern.

Sterilisation of the instruments

In accordance with the Gastroenterological Society of Australia (GESA) guidelines, our Centre ensures that all colonoscopes and equipment used during procedures are completely cleaned and disinfected and that all reusable medical devices/instruments are sterilised between each patient so that there is no risk of transmission of any serious diseases.

The Centre also maintains nationally recognised AS/NZS ISO 9001 certification and has full NSQHS accreditation as part of our ongoing commitment to the delivery of quality care and service to our patients.



Thank you for choosing the Southern Endoscopy Centre. If you have any further questions, comments or concerns please don't hesitate to contact the Centre on **8294 9355**.