

Colonoscopy Information

What is a Colonoscopy?

A colonoscopy is a procedure used to inspect and examine the lining of the large bowel (colon). It is performed through the use of a long flexible tube (called an endoscope) with a light and camera at the end.

How is a Colonoscopy Performed?

A colonoscopy is performed typically under sedation/anaesthetic. The procedure takes 20-30 minutes during which time the gastroenterologist will carefully examine the lining of the bowel. Tissue samples (biopsies) may be taken depending on the reason for the procedure. Polyps (fleshy growths on the lining of the bowel) may also be removed during the procedure. Following the colonoscopy, you may feel bloated due to use of air to inflate the bowel during the procedure.

What are the Risks of a Colonoscopy?

Colonoscopy is generally a well-tolerated procedure. In the majority of patients there are no side effects or complications from the procedure. The most common side effect is bloating/fullness after the colonoscopy as a result of air used during the procedure. Other uncommon complications include perforation, bleeding, aspiration/anaesthetic complications, failure to complete the procedure, or missed lesions.

Why is Bowel Preparation Needed for a Colonoscopy?

Bowel preparation is needed before the procedure to allow the bowel to be cleaned so that the lining can be carefully examined. It requires a combination of dietary changes as well as laxative medications. The procedure is more likely to be accurate and complete if there is good bowel preparation.

As the procedure is under sedation/anaesthesia, you will require a responsible adult to drive you home, and you should not stay alone that night.