



What will happen during the colonoscopy?

Before the colonoscopy you will be asked to change into a hospital gown. A clip will be attached to the finger and a blood pressure cuff applied to the arm to monitor blood pressure, pulse and oxygen levels. Oxygen will be administered by a tube into your nostril. You will be asked to lie on your left side and an injection given to make you relaxed and sleepy.

The colonoscope will be inserted into your bottom and air is gently passed into the bowel. The air may cause you to feel the need to open the bowel. The colonoscope can remove any liquid in the bowel so you will not soil yourself. Small tissue samples (biopsies) may be taken depending on your symptoms. These are painless.

If a polyp is found it will be removed. A polyp is a growth from the lining of the bowel and if left they can grow and cause problems in the future.

The procedure will take between 20- 40 minutes.

What will happen after the colonoscopy?

You will be monitored by nursing staff until the sedation has worn off. Usually after 1 hour you will be ready to be discharged. You will need a friend or relative to take you home. You will not be able to go home by public transport. Once home you can eat and drink normally but should rest for the remainder of the day.

What can I expect after a colonoscopy?

Most people are ready to go home after resting for half an hour or so. You may need to stay a bit longer for observation if you have had any polyps removed.

The operator will also tell you what they saw before you leave. However, if you have had a sedative you may not remember afterwards what they said. Therefore, you may wish to have a relative or close friend with you who may be able to remember what was said.

What are the risks of having a colonoscopy?

A colonoscopy carries a small risk of complications, the main risks are:
Perforation or tear of the lining of the bowel wall (1 in every 1000) the risk of perforation is higher if polyps are removed (1 in 500)
Bleeding may occur at the biopsy site or polyp removal site (1 in every 150). This is usually minor and can be dealt with at the time of the procedure.
A reaction to the drugs used for sedation.

Are there any side-effects from having a colonoscopy?

Most colonoscopies are done without any problem. The sedative may cause you to feel tired or sleepy for several hours afterwards. You may pass a small amount of blood from your anus if a biopsy was taken, or if a polyp was removed.

Occasionally, the colonoscope may cause damage to the colon. This may cause bleeding, infection and, rarely, perforation. If any of the following occur within 48 hours after a colonoscopy, consult a doctor immediately:

- Abdominal pain. (In particular if it becomes gradually worse, and is different or more intense to any 'usual' pains that you may have.)
- Fever (raised temperature).
- Passing a lot of blood from your anus.

Symptoms following the procedure

These are the unwanted, but mostly temporary effects you may get after having the procedure.

After having a colonoscopy you may feel bloated and uncomfortable due to trapped wind. You may find that lying on your front can sometimes help. Trapped wind usually passes after a few hours. You may also bleed a little from your back passage if you have had a biopsy or polyp removed.

It is usual to feel a little bloated and “windy” after a colonoscopy, peppermint tea helps to settle these symptoms down.