



# A guide to...

## Having a Colonoscopy Patient Information

### How to contact us

Booking and interpreting queries – please call the number on your appointment letter

Clinical queries – Hemel Hempstead 01442 287968 / Watford 01923 436095

Any other query – Please call Hemel Hempstead 01442 287681 / Watford 01923 217530

If you need this leaflet in another language, large print, Braille or audio version,  
please call **01923 217 198** or email [westherts.pals@nhs.net](mailto:westherts.pals@nhs.net)



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## What is a Colonoscopy?

A colonoscopy is an investigation that allows us to look directly at your colon. A flexible tube is passed into your back passage and around your colon. Through this tube, we will be able to look for any abnormalities that may be present. If necessary, small tissue samples (biopsies) can be taken during the examination for laboratory analysis. Polyps, which are abnormal growths of tissue from the lining of the bowel wall, can also be removed. Risks and benefits are explained on your consent form (enclosed with appointment letter).

## Preparation

To allow a clear view the colon must be completely free of waste material. You will have been sent a laxative solution to drink prior to your examination. **It is absolutely vital that you follow the instructions in the bowel preparation information as you take this solution. Otherwise, this procedure may need to be cancelled.**

If you are taking iron tablets you will need to stop taking these for five days before your procedure. **If you are taking blood thinning tablets (warfarin, clopidogrel, ticagrelor, dabagatran, rivaroxaban, apixaban or edoxaban) please continue to take these unless you have been advised otherwise by a clinician prior to your test.** If you are taking diabetes medication you will receive an information leaflet and you may also wish to speak with your diabetes specialist nurse. **Please take all other medication as you would usually.** Please ensure you bring a list with you of all medications you are currently taking.

**If you are having a gastroscopy on the same day as your colonoscopy please remember to stop drinking 2 hours before your appointment time.**

It is recommended that you do not travel abroad within two weeks of your procedure for safety reasons. This could invalidate your travel insurance. Please call us if you would like to discuss.

## What will happen?

When you arrive the nurse will explain the procedure and answer any questions you may have. You will be asked to sign a consent form, giving us your permission to proceed with the test. You will be asked to change into a gown and dignity shorts will be provided. You may need to have a cannula inserted into your arm to give medications.

## In the procedure room

The nurse will ask you some safety questions. You will then be asked to position yourself on your left hand side. The endoscopist will check your back passage with a gloved finger and then the Endoscope will be inserted. Throughout the procedure you may experience some abdominal cramping and pressure from the carbon dioxide. This is quite normal and the gas is absorbed very quickly, reducing discomfort. You may also get the sensation of wanting to go to the toilet but as your bowel is already empty, there is little risk of this happening. During the procedure, you may be asked to change your position (i.e. lay on your back).

## Keeping you comfortable

Two kinds of medicines are available to keep you comfortable;

1. Entonox which is commonly known as gas and air. This light sedative gas works as a very effective pain killer for many people having a colonoscopy. If you chose to have Entonox, you will be encouraged to rest for a short while after the test after which time you will be safe to drive.
2. Intravenous conscious sedation can be given to you through a small intravenous line (IV) line placed in your arm or hand. This will make you feel relaxed but not asleep. With this type of sedation, it will be necessary for you to rest in the unit afterwards. It is also essential that you arrange for a responsible person to escort you home after the test and stay with you for 24 hours. **Failure to make these arrangements may result in the investigation being cancelled.** Please note conscious sedation is not a general anaesthetic.

## Risks

### Standard colonoscopy

In one in every 2,000 cases a small hole in the colon can be caused (perforation) or bleeding can occur after a biopsy.

### Colonoscopy with polyp removal

A bleed might occur in one out of every 150 cases and one in every 500 cases a perforation may occur.

### Colonoscopy with endoscopic mucosal resection (large polyp removal)

A bleed might occur in 1 in 20 patients and a perforation in 1 in 150 patients.

If a complication does occur, observation in hospital is necessary and surgery may be needed. Very rarely a bleed can start any time up to two weeks after the test, please contact us if this occurs.

## When will I get the results of the procedure?

You will be given a copy of the report before you leave the department and the doctor or nurse will talk to you at the end of the procedure to explain their findings. If you have had samples sent to the laboratory the results will be reviewed by the endoscopist and you will be contacted within two weeks if there is anything of concern.