



A guide to...

Having a colon capsule endoscopy

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
or 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



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Having a colon capsule endoscopy

Introduction

You have been advised to have a colon capsule endoscopy (pillcam colon). We have written this leaflet to help answer some of the concerns you may have about the test. It may not answer all of your questions; if you have any worries please do not hesitate to ask:

The aims of this leaflet are:

- to explain what happens on the day of your test
- to answer some of the questions you may have about the test
- to tell you what preparation is required.

What is a colon capsule endoscopy (pillcam colon)?

Colon capsule endoscopy (or pillcam colon) is a test which looks for abnormalities in the colon (large intestine). The capsule is the size of a large vitamin pill (32mm x 12mm). It contains two tiny video cameras powered by two tiny batteries and a wireless transmitter. You will be asked to swallow the capsule after having a low fibre diet for three days and following a laxative regime. The capsule starts taking the photographs which are sent by transmitter to a data recorder (pocket-size computer) which is carried around in a shoulder bag.

Why do I need a (pillcam colon) capsule endoscopy?

You have been advised to have a colon capsule endoscopy to assess your large intestine to see if there is anything wrong as you may have symptoms, an abnormal blood or stool test or have had a polyp or cancer in the past. The colon capsule is an alternative to having a colonoscopy or CT colonography. It may be that you are unable or do not wish to undergo these alternative tests or that a colonoscopy was previously unsuccessful. You will have discussed these options with your doctor or specialist nurse.

How is the test done?

We usually give you the pill camera in the morning. Thirty minutes after you swallow the capsule we will make a check to ensure it has left your stomach. We know that occasionally some people's stomachs are slow to empty. If you are one of these people, we may give you medication to increase movement in your stomach. If this is unsuccessful it may be necessary to place the pill camera using an endoscope. This will only be done after further discussion with you. Throughout the test you will be given medication to help move the pillcam through the digestive tract. You will resume normal activities and return the equipment at the end of the day.

Occasionally, if the capsule hasn't passed you may return the equipment early the following morning. The equipment is removed after the pillcam has been passed out of the body. The video can then be reviewed by the doctor or nurse. Results are sent to the referring doctor and GP as well as yourself. This usually takes up to four weeks.

What Preparation is necessary for a colon capsule?

Please wear light weight, loose fitting clothing, preferably a t-shirt and trousers or shorts, when attending for your test. Dietary preparation and a bowel preparation are required prior to colon capsule. Please see the enclosed leaflet "Preparing for your procedure" for further details on this. Please ensure you follow these instructions carefully.

What are the benefits of a colon capsule?

Colon capsule can visualise fine detail of the bowel without the need for an invasive camera or radiation. This is a painless procedure and does not require sedation or pain relief. You are free to move around throughout the day and it does not involve exposure to radiation.

Can there be complications or risks?

With this procedure there is a small risk that the test may need to be repeated if the colon is not clean enough to see anything. Occasionally the capsule will not capture the entire bowel and a further investigation may be required to ensure all of the large intestine has been seen. If an abnormality is seen on the capsule images you may require a camera test afterwards to evaluate and treat this.

There is a small risk that the capsule to go down the wrong way (aspiration). We will check carefully for any swallowing difficulties prior to the test. We will give you water and help you swallow the capsule so this is very rare.

The main serious risk of pillcam colon is for the capsule to become stuck in the bowel. This is rare (1 in 200). When this happens, it does not pass through because of a narrowing in the bowel which is the cause of the problem being investigated. So non-passage of the pill camera does mean that the answer has been found. It may be that with treatment the capsule will pass itself. Rarely one might need an endoscopic camera test to retrieve the capsule or an operation.

Furthermore, it rarely blocks the bowel completely. If there is any concern you may have a narrowed bowel we would perform a patency capsule test first. This is a dummy pill that is swallowed to check that the small bowel is not obstructed and therefore safe to swallow the pill camera. If you require a patency capsule, further information will be given to you.

You must not have an MRI scan until the pillcam has been excreted from the body.

Please tell us if you are pregnant as the test should not be performed during pregnancy.

The consent form

Before a doctor or healthcare professional examines or treats you, they will need to gain your consent. This will be required in writing. If you later change your mind, you are entitled to withdraw consent, even after signing. A copy of the consent form will be offered to you. The health professional / doctor will ensure you know enough information about the procedure to enable you to decide about your treatment. They will write this information on the consent form as well as discussing choices of treatment with you.

We encourage you to ask questions and inform us of any concerns that you may have. It may be helpful for you to write these down as a reminder. The main thing to remember is that it is your decision. It is up to you to choose whether or not to consent to what is being proposed. Ask as many questions as you like and please express any concerns about medication, allergies or past medical history.