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**Your guide to a
small bowel
capsule
endoscopy**

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Patient information

Your guide to a small bowel capsule endoscopy



Excellent patient care, together

What is a small bowel capsule endoscopy?

A small bowel capsule endoscopy is a test which looks for abnormalities, specifically in the small bowel (small intestine). The capsule (PillCam) is the size of a large vitamin pill (26mm x 11mm). It contains a small video camera powered by a battery which transmits images of the bowel to a wireless transmitter worn around the waist. You will be asked to swallow the camera after consuming a laxative to clear the bowel. The camera will start to take photographs which are sent directly by the wireless transmitter to the data recorder (a pocket-sized computer) which is carried in a shoulder bag throughout the test.

Why do I need a small bowel capsule endoscopy?

You have been advised to have a small bowel capsule endoscopy to assess your small intestine for conditions such as Crohn's disease, Coeliac disease, or bleeding of unexplained origin. A small bowel capsule endoscopy may also be recommended for patients who have had an abnormality identified through previous imaging, like a CT. It may be that you are unable or do not wish to undergo any alternative tests or these have been previously unsuccessful. You will have the opportunity to discuss these options with your doctor or specialist nurse.

The advantage of small bowel capsule endoscopy?

- The test does not require sedation, so you can drive and continue your day as normal.
- The test will not cause you any pain or discomfort.
- The test has fewer potential complications.
- The test is non-invasive and does not expose you to any radiation.

How is the test done?

When you arrive for your appointment (usually in the morning), a nurse will explain the test to you, ask you some questions about your health and medications and complete a consent form. This also allows you time to ask any questions you may have. Once you have been consented the belt and data recorder will be adjusted for you, and you will be asked to drink a small amount of liquid containing Infacol to assist clearing any bubbles in your oesophagus and stomach. Once a connection is established between the PillCam and the recorder, you will be asked to swallow the capsule. You will stay at the hospital until the data recorder confirms the capsule is in the small bowel and then you will be able to go home with further instructions. Once you have passed the capsule, the test is over. You do not have to retrieve the capsule, please flush it away. You will be asked to return the transmitter, sensors, and accessories on the same day, or early the following morning. The video will then be reviewed by the doctor or nurse. You, your GP, and the referring doctor will receive a copy of the results, which can take up to 4 weeks.

Preparation

Please wear light weight, loose fitting clothing, preferably a t-shirt and trousers/skirt when attending your appointment. Bowel preparation will be required prior to your small bowel capsule endoscopy. You will receive an information pack when your procedure is booked, which will include a detailed instruction sheet. Please ensure you follow these instructions carefully.

Are there any complications or risks?

Small bowel capsule endoscopy is usually a straightforward and safe test. However, there are a few risks and potential complications you should consider before the test, which are:

- The capsule to become stuck in the bowel. This is rare (1 in 200). If this occurs the appropriate treatment is administered to encourage the capsule to pass itself. It is rare, but you may require an endoscopic procedure to retrieve the capsule or surgery. If there are any concerns prior to the test a patency test will be performed. This is a dummy pill that is swallowed to check the small bowel is not obstructed and therefore safe to swallow the capsule. You will be informed if you require a patency capsule.
- The procedure may need to be repeated if the small intestine is not clean enough to see anything.
- The capsule does not collect specimens or take biopsies, so you may have to return for further procedures if indicated.
- There is a small risk of the capsule going down the wrong way (aspiration). We check for any swallowing concerns prior to the test and provide you with water to swallow the capsule, so this is very rare.

Important information

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

Please tell us if you are pregnant or have a cardiac device implanted.

How to contact us

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