



Colonoscopy

Information for patients

Please note:

- The time on your appointment letter is **the time you need to arrive** at the Day Treatment Centre and not the time you will have your procedure.
- **You may have to wait for several hours** from arrival to the start of your procedure. Please arrive prepared for this. It may be a good idea to bring some reading material.
- **Please inform the department** as soon as possible if:
 - you need a **translator or interpreter**.
 - you take **iron tablets, strong painkillers (for example Codeine), medication for diabetes or blood thinning medication** as we may need to stop some of these medications a few days before your colonoscopy.
 - you did not receive or collect **your bowel preparation**.
- Let the Nurse/Doctor know if you have a **pacemaker, implantable defibrillator, artificial hips or any other metal implant**.
- If you wish to have sedation for your procedure, **please ensure you have someone available to take you home afterward**. If you are unable to arrange escort, inform the endoscopy Nurses as soon as possible.
- Endoscopy is a restricted area, and **relatives/friends are not allowed** to come inside the department. We have a trained team of Nurses and endoscopists and telephone or face to face Interpreters to help you.
- Please contact the Booking Services team on **020 7288 3822** if this appointment time is not convenient for you or if you are unable to keep your appointment. You can also email whh-tr.endoscopy@nhs.net
- If you have a question about your procedure or medications, please contact the hospital switchboard on **020 7272 3070** and ask for **bleep number 2711** from Monday to Friday 8:30 to 17:30. Alternatively you can contact **020 7288 3811/3819** or email whh-tr.endoscopypreassessment@nhs.net.
- Please leave all valuables at home. The hospital cannot accept responsibility for these items and lockers are not available.



What is a colonoscopy?

- A colonoscopy is a camera test to look inside your large bowel or colon.
- The instrument used is called an endoscope, which is a flexible tube of about 1cm diameter. It has a camera and a light at the end, and it is carefully introduced through the back passage and moved around the bowel by a specialist Doctor or Nurse.
- The colonoscopy usually takes around 30 minutes.
- The procedure can sometimes be a bit uncomfortable, and it is normal to have cramping or feel bloated during the procedure.
- You have the choice of using sedation or 'gas and air' to keep you more comfortable during the procedure.

Intravenous Sedation

- A sedative injection and a painkiller will be injected into a vein.
- The sedation will make you feel slightly drowsy and relaxed but will not put you to sleep. You may be aware of what is going on around you and will be able to follow simple instructions during the examination.
- We will monitor your vital signs (blood pressure, pulse and oxygen saturation) throughout the examination.
- **If you decide to have the sedation, you must have someone to take you home.** If you are having difficulties to find an escort, inform one of the endoscopy Nurses using the telephone numbers provided.

Entonox (gas and air)

- Entonox is the trade name for the mixture of 50% oxygen and 50% nitrous oxide, also known as 'gas and air'. This is an alternative to intravenous sedation.
- It is a fairly strong painkiller and works quickly to control pain.
- It is breathed out of the lungs within a few minutes, so it wears off quickly. With Entonox you will not need an escort home.
- Inform endoscopy nurses if you have any breathing problems, as Entonox can sometimes not be given in some cases.



Why do I need a colonoscopy?

- You may be asked to have a colonoscopy for the following reasons:
 - To try and find the cause of your symptoms, such as rectal bleeding, diarrhoea, constipation or abdominal pain.
 - If you have an existing disease such as Crohn's or colitis.
 - If you have any family history of bowel cancer.
 - To find out more about an abnormality seen on a CT or MRI scan.
 - To remove polyps - polyps are very small growths that can occur on the bowel wall. Some are perfectly innocent, but others will be removed and may need to be reviewed in the laboratory before a diagnosis can be confirmed. This is termed polypectomy.
- A colonoscopy is a safe examination, and serious complications are extremely rare.
- You need to read this information carefully and weigh up the benefits against the risks of having the procedure.
- You will be asked to sign a consent form before your procedure is performed.

What are the main risks?

- Serious complications are extremely rare.
- The most serious complication is a perforation or tear of the lining of the bowel. The risk slightly increases if a polypectomy is performed. An operation may be required to repair the tear.
- There is a small risk of bleeding, and the risk increases if a polypectomy is performed. A blood transfusion may be required.
- There is a risk of missed pathology which is up to 10% for large polyps.
- If the procedure is too uncomfortable or the bowel preparation is not effective, we may not be able to complete the test or perform it at all. In such cases, your procedure will be rescheduled, or we may recommend a different type of camera test.
- Sedation can cause breathing problems and it is very common for your blood pressure to drop by a small amount, but such problems are normally short lived. You will be monitored carefully during your procedure.
- The Endoscopist will explain all these risks to you during the consenting process.



What are the alternatives?

- CT pneumocolon – a scan of your large bowel; however, this test has limitations.
- Flexible sigmoidoscopy – a camera test to look on the left side of your large bowel.
- Stool sample to check for blood traces; however, if this test comes back positive, you may still need to have a colonoscopy.

What happens before the colonoscopy?

- Before you have your colonoscopy, it is important to follow a low fibre diet, and you will be given some laxatives to take the day before the procedure. This is to ensure your bowel is completely empty.
- You must follow all instructions given to you, as otherwise your procedure may need to be repeated or cancelled.
- Remember to inform the endoscopy department if you take medication to thin your blood, iron tablets or medication for diabetes.
- **DO NOT STOP ANY OF YOUR REGULAR MEDICATIONS BEFORE THE PROCEDURE UNLESS TOLD OTHERWISE BY THE ENDOSCOPY NURSE OR REFERRING DOCTOR.**

What happens when I arrive in the Endoscopy Unit?

- On the day of the procedure, when you arrive at the unit, you will be asked to complete a short form with personal details and information regarding your current medications. If you are unable to complete the form yourself, someone will help you.
- Please bring any medications that you are currently taking with you, or an up-to-date copy of your prescription.
- You will be seen by a Nurse who will ask you a few questions about your medical history. This is to confirm that you are fit enough to undergo the colonoscopy examination.
- The Nurse will record your heart rate, blood pressure and oxygen levels. If you are diabetic, your blood glucose level will also be checked.
- They will also discuss the consent form with you.



- The Nurse will also ask you about your arrangements for getting home after your colonoscopy. **If you have decided to have a sedative, you must be accompanied home.**
- You will be escorted to a designated changing area where you will be asked to remove your lower garments and put on a hospital gown, as well as some special shorts.
- If you wish you can bring your own dressing gown and slippers.
- You will wait in the changing area until the team is ready to call you.
- **REMEMBER:** The time on your appointment letter is **the time you need to arrive** at the Day Treatment Centre and not the time you will have your procedure.

What happens during the examination?

- A member of the team will bring you outside the procedure room where the Endoscopy will explain the procedure and ask you to sign the consent form; here you can ask any other questions that you may have.
- If you have sedation, the Nurses will insert a cannula into your arm. If you opt for gas and air, the Nurses will explain to you how to use it.
- After all checks are done, you will be asked to lie on your left side and the Endoscopist will start the procedure with a rectal examination followed by the camera insertion.
- Carbon dioxide (gas) is gently passed into the bowel to make moving the endoscope around easier.
- You may feel some discomfort when the Endoscopist moves the scope around the natural bends in your bowel. This discomfort will be kept to a minimum.
- **Please note: Whittington Health is a teaching hospital and sometimes a medical/nursing student can be asked to observe your procedure.**

What happens after the examination?

- The Nurses will continue to monitor your breathing, heart rate and oxygen levels throughout the procedure and afterwards, during the recovery period.
- If you have had a sedative, you may rest for 30 minutes, and we will monitor your vital signs.



- Once you have recovered from the initial effects of any sedation you will be offered some refreshments (you can bring your own food if you wish to do so).
- You should not have any pain other than some discomfort from wind which will settle after a few hours.
- Before you leave the unit, a Nurse or the Endoscopist will give you a copy of the report and explain what was seen during the examination and whether you need any medicines or need to come back for further tests.
- If you live alone, we recommend that you arrange for someone to stay with you overnight.
- **You must not drive, take alcohol, operate heavy machinery, or sign any legally binding documents for 24 hours following the examination.**
- Most patients feel perfectly back to normal after 24 hours.
- If you still feel drowsy after 24 hours, you should wait a further 24 hours before driving.

After you go home

- **If you have any persistent abdominal pain, bleeding from your back passage or fever in the period up to 48 hours after your colonoscopy**, please contact the Endoscopy Department. During out of hours, attend the nearest hospital emergency department and **take a copy of your endoscopy report with you.**
- For any other queries, you can contact the endoscopy department:

Endoscopy Department

Tel.: 020 7288 3811/3819

Email: whh-tr.endoscopypreassessment@nhs.net

Patient advice and liaison service (PALS)

If you have a compliment, complaint or concern please contact our PALS team on 020 7288 5551 or whh-tr.PALS@nhs.net

If you need a large print, audio or translated copy of this leaflet please email whh-tr.patient-information@nhs.net. We will try our best to meet your needs.

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Date published: 08/10/2024

Review date: 08/10/2026

Ref: EIM/Endos/Colonos/02

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