



## Fact Sheet - Colonoscopy

### What happens to current medicines if I require a colonoscopy?

Most medications may be continued as usual. However, some medications can interfere with bowel preparation or the examination. Aspirin, arthritis medications, anticoagulants, insulin, and iron products are examples of medications whose use should be discussed with your doctor prior to the examination.

It is essential that you alert your doctor if you require antibiotics prior to undergoing any dental procedures that you may have scheduled, since you may need antibiotics prior to your colonoscopy as well.

**Possible medication adjustments:** You should discuss with the doctor whether you need to adjust any of your usual medications before the procedure, any drug allergies you may have, and whether you have any major conditions such as a heart or lung condition, that might require special attention during the procedure.

### What can I expect during a Colonoscopy?

Colonoscopy is usually well tolerated. There may be a feeling of pressure or bloating during the procedure. Your doctor will give you a medication through a vein which will put you to sleep and you will not feel or remember anything. You will be lying on your left side, or on your back, while the colonoscope is advanced slowly through the large intestine. As the colonoscope is slowly withdrawn, the lining is again carefully examined.

The procedure usually takes between 15 and 30 minutes. In some cases, passage of the colonoscope through the entire colon to its junction with the small intestine cannot be achieved. The doctor will decide if the limited examination is sufficient or if other examinations are necessary.

### What happens if something abnormal is detected during the procedure?

If your doctor thinks that an area of the bowel needs to be evaluated in greater detail, a biopsy (tissue sample of the colon lining) may be taken using tiny forceps. These specimens are submitted to the pathology laboratory for analysis. If colonoscopy is being performed to identify sites of bleeding, the areas of bleeding may be controlled through the colonoscope by injecting certain medications. If polyps are found, they are generally removed.

*Remember, biopsies are taken for many reasons and do not necessarily mean the cancer is suspected.*

### What are Polyps? Why and how are they removed?

Polyps are abnormal growths from the lining of the colon. They vary in size from a tiny dot to several centimetres. The majority of polyps are benign (non-cancerous). It is not always possible to identify benign from malignant (cancerous) polyps by its outer appearance alone. Hence removed polyps are sent for analysis by a pathologist. Removal of colon polyps is an important means of preventing colorectal cancer.

#### LOCATIONS FOR CONSULTATION

- Berwick  
GI Health  
7 Gloucester Av  
Berwick 3806
- Mulgrave  
Suite 2  
529 Police Rd  
Mulgrave 3170
- Hampton Park  
Southern Cross Medical Centre  
Cnr Stuart Ave & Fordholm Rd  
Hampton Park 3976

#### LOCATIONS FOR ENDOSCOPY

- St John of God Hospital  
Gibb St  
Berwick 3806
- The Valley Private Hospital  
Cnr Police & Gladstone Rds  
Mulgrave 3170



Tiny polyps may be totally destroyed by fulguration (burning) but larger polyps are removed by a technique called snare polypectomy. The doctor passes a wire loop (snare) through the colonoscope and severs the attachment of the polyp from the intestinal wall by means of an electrical current. You should feel no pain during the polypectomy. There is a small risk that removing a polyp will cause bleeding or result in a burn to the wall of the colon (perforation), which could require emergency surgery.

### What happens after a colonoscopy

After colonoscopy, your doctor will explain the results to you. If you have been given medications during the procedure, you will be observed until most of the effects of the sedation have worn off (usually 1-2 hours).

You may have some cramping or bloating because of the air introduced into the colon during the examination. This should disappear quickly with the passage of flatus (gas).

You will need to arrange to have someone accompany you home from the examination.

It is recommended that you **DO NOT** engage in the following, until the day after the procedure:

- a. Drive a car
- b. Work machinery
- c. Consume alcohol
- d. Sign legal documents
- e. Make important decisions

### Oral Contraceptives:

These may not be effective after bowel preparation, take extra precautions for the rest of the month.

### Clothes

Have a short sleeve top or T-Shirt to wear for the procedure. Please leave your jewellery and extra cash at home.

### Transport

You will need to arrange for a relative or friend to drive you home after the test. Taxi drivers are unable to accept responsibility for your care on discharge from the hospital.

### Accounts

Please bring your Medicare card/Private Health Insurance details with you.

*If you are having difficulties with bowel preparation or if you have questions regarding your colonoscopy please call the hospital where your procedure has been booked.*

#### LOCATIONS FOR CONSULTATION

- Berwick  
GI Health  
7 Gloucester Av  
Berwick 3806
- Mulgrave  
Suite 2  
529 Police Rd  
Mulgrave 3170
- Hampton Park  
Southern Cross Medical Centre  
Cnr Stuart Ave & Fordholm Rd  
Hampton Park 3976

#### LOCATIONS FOR ENDOSCOPY

- St John of God Hospital  
Gibb St  
Berwick 3806
- The Valley Private Hospital  
Cnr Police & Gladstone Rds  
Mulgrave 3170