

Colonoscopy

This leaflet explains more about your colonoscopy and what you can expect when you come to hospital. It also details the instructions on how to prepare for this procedure, including when to stop eating, how to cleanse your bowel and what tablets you may need to stop.

It is very important that no food or milk is consumed in the 24 hour period prior your examination. Please read the fasting and laxative instructions overleaf.

If you have been sent a consent form for Colonoscopy, please read this and bring the signed document with you to your appointment.

Colonoscopy procedures are booked at either the Endoscopy Unit at St George's Hospital or the Day Case Unit at Queen Mary's Hospital, Roehampton. Please refer to your appointment letter / appointment text for the location of your procedure.

What is a colonoscopy?

Colonoscopy is a camera examination of the bowel. It helps to find the cause of your abdominal symptoms and to diagnose and sometimes treat diseases of the bowel. The time taken to perform the procedure can be highly variable but most procedures are completed in 30 to 45 minutes. However, please allow up to three hours in the hospital for the whole process to be completed. We recommend that you bring a book or magazine with you to read whilst you are waiting.

What are the risks?

This procedure is very safe, but very rarely there can be a problem, for example:

- The sedative can affect your breathing making it slow and shallow, however you will be closely monitored throughout the procedure and in recovery.
- During colonoscopy, there is overall less than a 1:2000 chance of causing significant bleeding and / or perforation (unwanted tear in the bowel). Minor bleeding is to be expected if biopsies are taken and this bleeding usually stops spontaneously.
- If polyps are removed:
 - The risk of significant bleeding is 1:200 – 1:1,000. If bleeding occurs during the procedure, it can usually be managed by the endoscopist.
 - The risk of causing a perforation is 1:500 – 1:1,500. If a perforation occurs at the time of endoscopy, admission to hospital and treatment with antibiotics may be required.
 - If significant bleeding and / or a perforation cannot be treated by the endoscopist, further intervention, including radiological embolisation (to stop bleeding) or surgery may be required.
 - The risk of bleeding and / or perforation can remain for up to 14 days after the procedure. If you should experience significant bleeding and / or severe abdominal pain at home, you should seek medical help by contacting either the endoscopy unit where the procedure took place or your local A&E department.

- Overall, there is a 1:2,400 chance that a blood transfusion may be needed.
- There is a small risk of an abnormality being missed.
- Overall, there is a 5-8% chance that the endoscopist will not be able to complete the procedure. If this occurs, you may be offered the opportunity to have the procedure repeated on another day or an alternative investigation may be suggested.

Are there any alternatives?

For some conditions it may be possible to perform a CT scan. The disadvantage of this procedure is that a biopsy cannot be taken or a polyp removed. The radiation from the scan may make this unsuitable for some patients.

If my symptoms have stopped before the colonoscopy should I still come for the procedure?

Yes. It is important that you still come for the procedure. Your doctor has organised this to ensure you have no problems in your large bowel. Although the symptoms may have gone, it remains important to examine the bowel.

How can I prepare for my colonoscopy?

- A clear view of the colon is required for this examination to be successful and so your bowel must be as empty as possible. You will have been prescribed either Citrafleet or Moviprep which are laxatives designed to clear your bowel of stool. Please read carefully the instructions below.
- If you are diabetic or taking Warfarin or blood thinning medications such as Apixaban, Rivaroxaban, Dabigatran, Clopidogrel, Ticagrelor or Prasugrel, please contact us on the telephone numbers on page 8 of this leaflet under **Contact us**.
- Take other medications as normal, except iron tablets or stool bulking laxatives such as Fybogel or Movicol which should be stopped one week before your examination.
- If you are taking the contraceptive pill, please take additional precautions for one week following the bowel preparation.
- Please do not take oral medications one hour before or one hour after taking the bowel preparation.
- Please bring a list of your regular medications and bring any inhalers or sprays with you.
- If you object to receiving blood products, we need to know in advance so please contact us on the telephone numbers on page 8 of this leaflet under **Contact us**.

Three days before the procedure – Start a low fibre diet

It is important to reduce the amount of fibre you eat **before taking the bowel preparation**.

This means avoiding cereals, wholemeal bread, salads, fruits or any food containing nuts or seeds.

You must stop eating 24 hours before your appointment.

Please see below for a guide on what foods you can eat and what you need to avoid:

Important: You need to stop eating 24 hours before your appointment.

You can eat / drink (up to 24 hours before):	Do not eat / drink:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Lean beef, lamb, ham, veal, pork or chicken ✓ Fish, shellfish ✓ White rice, noodles or white pasta ✓ Peeled potatoes; boiled, baked or mashed ✓ Cornflakes, Rice Krispies, No Bran ✓ Eggs ✓ White bread or toast, honey, marmite ✓ Rich Tea or other plain biscuits ✓ Butter, Milk, Cheese, Cream, ✓ Yoghurt, Ice-cream ✓ Soya and tofu ✓ Gravy made from stock cubes ✓ Jelly; green or yellow only ✓ Tea, coffee, water, fizzy drinks, fruit juice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Fruit (fresh, dried or canned) <input type="checkbox"/> Brown rice and brown pasta <input type="checkbox"/> Vegetables <input type="checkbox"/> Roasted/deep fried chips <input type="checkbox"/> High fibre cereals and Porridge <input type="checkbox"/> Pulses or lentils <input type="checkbox"/> High fibre, Wholemeal / Multigrain bread <input type="checkbox"/> Jam / Marmalade <input type="checkbox"/> Nuts and seeds <input type="checkbox"/> Crisps <input type="checkbox"/> Red or blackcurrant jelly <input type="checkbox"/> Red / blackcurrant cordial or fruit juice

The day before the procedure - Start fasting and take bowel preparation

DO NOT EAT FOOD FOR 24 HOURS BEFORE THE PROCEDURE. (Please check your appointment time to see when to stop eating). During this time, take only *clear fluid* e.g. water, herbal tea, black tea or coffee (can have sugar but **no milk**), lemonade, sports drinks, orange squash. You may have clear soup (broth) or yellow / green jelly. You can continue clear fluids up until two hours before the examination.

How to take the bowel preparation

The section below explains how to take the bowel preparation. There are two types of bowel preparation, Citrafleet and Moviprep. Please follow the instructions for the bowel preparation provided to you and the timings of when to take it according to your appointment time.

If taking Citrafleet sachets

PLEASE DRINK 2-3 LITRES OF CLEAR FLUID DURING THE FASTING PERIOD.
(For morning and afternoon appointments).

Day before the procedure:

At 4pm

Drink one sachet of Citrafleet (mix with a glass of water). The drink may fizz. Drink a full glass of water after drinking the Citrafleet. It can start to work within as little as 30 minutes but can take up to five hours to work. Please drink plenty of clear fluids throughout the afternoon and evening as above.

Day of the procedure:

At 6am (or earlier if required)

Drink the second sachet of Citrafleet, even if you think the first one has already worked. Please drink a further 500mls to a litre of clear fluid up to two hours before the colonoscopy. For afternoon appointments you can take the second sachet at 9am.

You must stop drinking two hours prior to the procedure.

If taking Moviprep sachets:

Please follow the instructions according to your appointment time. (See next page.)

FOR MORNING APPOINTMENTS

Day before the procedure

At 12 noon

Make up your first jug of Moviprep by mixing both sachets A and B in a litre of water. Stir the solution until clear. Drink a glassful every 15-30 minutes until it is finished. Keep the rest of the mixture in the fridge as it tastes better when it is cold. It is also important to drink an additional 500ml of clear fluid during the evening.

At 6pm

Repeat as above with the remaining sachets A and B and drink a glass every half an hour until 7pm. Keep the remaining two glasses of preparation in the refrigerator for the following morning.

Day of the procedure

At 6am (or earlier if required)

Drink the remaining two glasses of bowel preparation and a further two glasses of clear fluid.

You must stop drinking two hours prior to the procedure.

FOR AFTERNOON APPOINTMENTS

Day before the procedure

At 4pm

Make up your first jug of Moviprep by mixing both sachets A and B in a litre of water. Stir the solution until clear. Drink a glassful every 15-30 minutes until it is finished. Keep the rest of the mixture in the refrigerator as it tastes better when it is cold. It is also important to drink an additional 500ml of clear fluid during the evening.

Day of the procedure

At 9am

Make up your second litre of Moviprep repeating the steps above and drink it over 1-2 hours, drinking a glassful every 15-30 minutes until it is finished. Following this please drink an extra 500mls of clear fluid.

You must stop drinking two hours prior to the procedure.

What if my bowel preparation hasn't worked for hours after taking the laxative?

Please be patient. We anticipate that the laxative will work within a few hours as outlined in the manufacturer's guidelines, but this can sometimes take a little longer depending on your age, diet, if you have diabetes and whether you suffer from constipation. If by the morning of your appointment you have had no result, please contact us for advice. Once it does start working please stay close to a toilet as sometimes no warning may be given.

What If the laxative makes me feel sick or nauseated?

Occasionally, nausea may be experienced. If this happens stop drinking the preparation for 15 minutes and then start again, slowly at first. If you experience nausea or vomiting go to your local pharmacy and ask for anti-sickness tablets. Contact the Endoscopy Unit on the telephone numbers of page 8 of this leaflet, if your symptoms persist.

Advice for diabetic patients

The bowel preparation can upset your diabetes temporarily. For further advice about your diabetes, please contact us on the telephone numbers on page 8 of this leaflet under **Contact us**. Alternatively you may wish to contact your diabetic nurse.

Tips on bowel preparation

Apply barrier cream to your anal area as repeated bowel actions can make you sore. If you feel uncomfortable, stop temporarily, keep moving about and you should feel better. If you do not like the taste, drinking it through a straw can help. No alcohol should be drunk the day before or on the day of your examination.

Asking for your consent and signing the consent form

It is important that you feel involved in decisions about your care. If you have been sent a consent form with your appointment letter, please take the time to read this before your appointment. If you feel happy that you understand what is involved and agree to have the procedure, please sign the consent and bring it with you to the appointment. You will have the opportunity to ask any questions before the procedure.

If you have not received the consent form, the information will be discussed with you and if you agree to proceed, you will be asked to sign a consent form before your procedure.

You can withdraw your consent at any time, even if you have said 'yes' previously. If you would like more details about our consent process, please ask for a copy of our policy.

On arrival at the endoscopy unit

- A nurse will check your details, including medications and allergies.
- If you have already signed the consent form, you will have the opportunity to ask any final questions with the endoscopist before the procedure. If you have not yet signed the form, the procedure will be explained again and you will be asked to sign a consent form.
- You will be asked to change into a gown and privacy shorts.

St George's is a national training centre for endoscopy. Students and qualified trainees may be involved in your care. If you do not want students to be present please inform the doctor or the nurse in charge.

What happens during colonoscopy?

- ALL patients attending for a colonoscopy will have an intravenous cannula sited for safety reasons.
- The colonoscope will be passed into the bowel and air introduced. The procedure may make you feel bloated and may cause episodes of abdominal discomfort and cramping. You may feel like you want to go to the toilet but this is just a sensation caused by the air. Your bowel should be empty from the laxative preparation so please do not worry about this. Your comfort will be assessed throughout the procedure and steps taken to minimise discomfort as much as possible.
- You will be offered the choice of having sedative and pain relief administered intravenously for the procedure. It makes you feel relaxed but not asleep. If you have sedation, you will need to be accompanied home after the procedure and be in the presence of a responsible adult for at least 12 hours after leaving the endoscopy department. Small amounts of sedative can remain in your body for 24 hours so you will not be allowed to drive for 24 hours following administration of sedation.
- As an alternative to sedation, you may be offered inhaled pain relief called Entonox (also known as 'gas and air' or 'laughing gas') to reduce discomfort during the procedure. You will be able to go home 30 minutes after the procedure unaccompanied.

A biopsy may be taken or a polyp may be removed during the examination. You cannot feel this but you can often visualise what is happening.

Will I feel any pain?

You may feel some discomfort from the air that is pumped into the large bowel so that the endoscopist can view the lining adequately. You may also feel intermittent mild cramping when the colonoscope moves around the bowel although this is not usually painful. A mild sedative and painkiller are usually given for the procedure but some people prefer not to have any. Entonox is also available: This is a "gas and air" mixture that can be used during the colonoscopy. It gives a short lasting pain relief and patients can go home unaccompanied 30 minutes later. It is not suitable for patients with certain lung conditions or who have had certain eye / ear procedures.

What happens after colonoscopy?

Following the procedure you will be taken to the recovery area where you will be monitored for 30 to 45 minutes. After this you will be able to get dressed and have some refreshments.

If you have had sedation you will not be allowed to drive and must arrange for someone to accompany you home. The medication given during the procedure will prohibit you from driving for 24 hours after the examination. Please do not plan to take public transport home unless accompanied. If you are unable to arrange transportation we can arrange a taxi to take you home, however you are responsible for the fare.

You will need a responsible adult at home for at least 12 hours. A nurse will give you a copy of the endoscopy report as well as some important discharge advice. If you have had no sedation or choose to have Entonox only you can leave unaccompanied. A normal diet can be resumed once the procedures are complete.

Where do I go?

Please see your appointment letter for the location of your appointment and the hospital address below:

St George's Hospital, Blackshaw Road, London, SW17 0QT. Please go to the Endoscopy Unit, First floor, St James' Wing.

Queen Mary's Hospital, Roehampton Lane, London, SW15 5PN. Please present at the main reception and you will be directed to the Day Case Unit.

Is there parking at the hospital?

At St George's Hospital, the car park entrance is located on Blackshaw Road. Queen Mary's Hospital has a car park on site. Please ensure you check the rates before parking.

Results / Will I have a follow-up appointment?

Upon completion of the colonoscopy the findings will be discussed with you. We will be able to tell you of any visual findings, however any samples will need to be sent to the laboratory for testing. This can take up to three weeks. A copy of the report will be sent to your referring doctor and your GP.

Useful sources of information

Video: What happens during a colonoscopy?

[Colonoscopy - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)

includes further explanation and videos about colonoscopy.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about your examination please contact us:

For appointments at St George's Hospital please call:

The Endoscopy Unit on 020 8725 1913 / 1491 Monday to Friday 9 am to 5pm.

For appointments at Queen Mary's Hospital please call:

The Day Case Unit on 020 8487 6466 Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm.

Preparation checklist

- If you are planning or have been advised to have sedation, arrange for a friend or relative (18 years of age or older) to escort you home after your appointment and be with you for at least 12 hours.
- If you do not have the appropriate support, we will not be able to give you sedation and the procedure may be cancelled.
- Make a note of the date of your appointment.
- If you are taking medications for diabetes or to prevent blood clots, please contact us for advice.
- Start a low fibre diet 3 days before your appointment.
- STOP EATING 24 hours before your appointment, clear fluids are allowed up to two hours before.
- Take your bowel preparation as per the instructions in this leaflet.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.stgeorges.nhs.uk

Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough wings (near the lift foyer). **Tel:** 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health. **Web:** www.nhs.uk

NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

Tel: 111

AccessAble

You can download accessibility guides for all our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website (www.accessable.co.uk). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.



Reference: GAS_PIC_04 Published: June 2023 Review date: June 2025