Patient & Family Guide

2024

Colonoscopy

VG Site

My specialist: _____

Phone: _____

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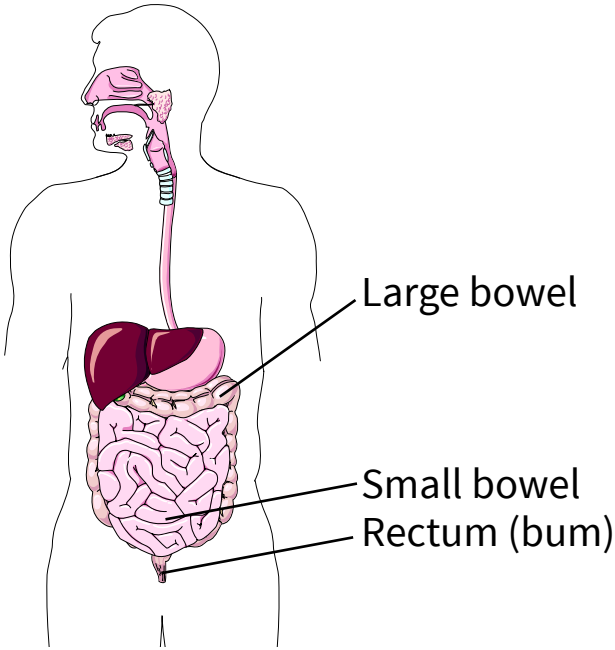
Colonoscopy

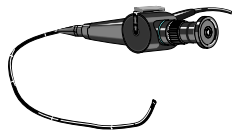
What is a colonoscopy?

- This is a test to look at your large bowel. The large bowel is also called the large intestine or the colon.



- This test is done by a specialist using an endoscope (a flexible tube with a light on the end).

Endoscope



What are the risks of this test?

A colonoscopy is a low risk procedure . As with any procedure, there are still some risks. Your specialist will talk with you about the risks before your test.

Possible risks include:

- The specialist may not see small polyps, especially if your bowel was not cleaned carefully (5 to 10% chance). You can lower this risk by cleaning your bowel as told by the specialist.
- A tear in your bowel wall (1 in 1,000 to 1 in 2,000 chance). If this happens, you may need surgery to fix the tear.
- Bleeding, if a polyp was taken out (1 in 200 to 1 in 500 chance).
- Bleeding, if a tissue sample was taken (1 in 10,000 chance). This may stop on its own, or may need more treatment.
- An infection from the equipment used for the test (1 in 1.8 million chance).
- A reaction to the sedation medication.
- Soreness and/or a lump where the intravenous (I.V.) tube was put in. These should go away over a few weeks.
- The specialist may not be able to finish the test because of technical problems, or if your bowel was not cleaned the right way.

How do I get ready for this test?

You may have sedation (medication to help you relax) during this test. This is rare.

- **If you have sedation, you must have a responsible adult:**
  - **stay in the hospital during your test.**
  - **take you home after your test.**
  - **stay with you overnight.**

If this is not possible, call your doctor before the test. We may have to cancel your test.

Before your test:

- A booking clerk will call you to give you information about your appointment.
- We will give you the name of the specialist who will do your test, and the date, time, and place of your test.
- Plan to be off work the day **before** your test, so you can clean your bowel.
  - Plan to be off work the day of your test, too.
  - Most people can go back to work the day after their test.
- **Your bowel must be empty to do this test**. Stool (poop) or fluids may make it hard to see the inside of your bowel.

- **Your specialist will give you instructions for cleaning your bowel. Please follow these instructions carefully**.
- If your bowel is not cleaned the right way:
  - the test will be less accurate.
  - the specialist may not be able to finish the test.

14 days (2 weeks) before your test

- **Do not eat**:
  - Seeds (like pumpkin seeds, poppy seeds, or sesame seeds)
  - Kernels (like corn, oats, or quinoa)
- Call your specialist if you need antibiotics for tests or dental work. Ask your specialist if you are not sure.
- **Tell the booking clerk and your specialist if you are taking these medications as these can raise your risk of bleeding**:
  - Blood thinners like ASA (Aspirin®), warfarin, heparin (Fragmin®), dabigatran (Pradaxa®), rivaroxaban (Xarelto®), apixaban (Eliquis®), edoxaban (Lixiana®)
  - Antiplatelets like clopidogrel (Plavix®), prasugrel, ticagrelor (Brilinta®)
- Tell your specialist if you take medication and/or insulin for diabetes. You may need to follow special instructions for taking these before your test.

- Tell your specialist if you have heart or lung disease.
- Tell your specialist if you are allergic to any medications.

If you need to cancel your test, please call your specialist at least 3 days (72 hours) before your test is scheduled. This will give us time to book another patient.

The day before your test

- Follow the instructions given to you by your specialist for cleaning your bowel.
- Drink your bowel prep liquid **and** 3 to 4 L of clear fluids. Clear fluids include:
  - Water
  - Apple juice
  - Sports drinks (like Gatorade® or Powerade®) **that are not red**
  - Clear or light-coloured pop (like Sprite® or ginger ale)
  - Tea **(without milk or cream)**
  - Clear soup broth

The day of your test

It is very important to follow these instructions:

- Your stomach must be empty.
- **Drink only clear fluids**.
- If you take medication for your heart, blood pressure, or breathing, take your medication as usual.
- Bring your blood glucose testing supplies with you to the hospital, if needed.
- **Bring a list of all your medications** (including prescription and over-the-counter medications, inhalers, creams, eye drops, patches, herbal medications, vitamins, and supplements) with you to the hospital.
- Bring the health questionnaire you got in the mail with you to the hospital.
- **Do not wear any jewelry or bring any valuables with you to the hospital**. The hospital is not responsible for the loss of any items.
- **Do not use scented products**. Nova Scotia Health is scent-free.

Where do I go for my test?

You must register at the kiosk on the main floor of either the Dickson Building (main entrance) or the Centennial Building (main entrance).

- Then go to the 9th floor of the Victoria Building at the Victoria General (VG) site. Check in at the registration desk.
- Be sure that you have enough time to park before your appointment. Parking at the VG site is limited.

How is the test done?

- An I.V. tube will be put in your hand or arm. You may be given medication to help you relax, and to help with any pain.
- The specialist will put the endoscope into your rectum and slowly move it through to your large bowel.
- They will use the endoscope to put air into your large bowel. This will make your bowel get bigger so they can see it better.
- The air may cause mild cramping and/or pain, or give you gas. You may feel like you need to poop.
- The specialist may take out polyps (see next page) or take a tissue sample.

- The test will take up to 60 minutes (1 hour).

What are polyps and how are they taken out?

- Polyps are small pieces of tissue that can form on, or in, an organ in your body (like your bowel).
- They are taken out by running an electrical current through a wire wrapped around the polyp.
- The inside of your bowel has no nerve endings. This means you will not feel any pain if you have polyps or tissue samples taken out during your test.

What will happen after the test?

- You will be taken to the recovery area. You will spend about 30 to 45 minutes there.
- You may feel like you need to pass gas or have a bowel movement (poop). Please try to pass the gas. This feeling should not last long.

If you had sedation:

- **You must have a responsible adult take you home after your test and stay with you overnight**.
- **Do not walk home. You may take a bus or a taxi home only if a responsible adult goes with you**.

For the next 24 hours (1 day) after sedation:

- **Do not drive a car or use any heavy machinery**.
- **Do not drink alcohol**.
- **Do not care for others (including children)**.
- **Do not sign any legal or important papers, or make any financial (money) decisions**.

- You may see small amounts of blood in your first couple of bowel movements. This is normal if a polyp or a tissue sample was taken out.

Call your doctor if you have any of these symptoms after your test:

- **A lot of bleeding or bleeding that does not stop**
- **Dizziness**

If you cannot reach your doctor, go to the nearest Emergency Department right away.

If you had a polyp or a tissue sample taken:

- **Do not take pain medication or blood-thinning medication for 7 days (1 week) after your test**. These medications can make you bleed more.

Notes:

This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

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Call 811 or visit: https://811.novascotia.ca

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