

Patient & Family Guide  
2018

# Colonoscopy

## VG Site

Aussi disponible en français :  
*Colonoscopie* (FF85-1506)

Also available in Arabic: (AR85-1479)

لعمريئة أعمللأب ابضأ مآوفر

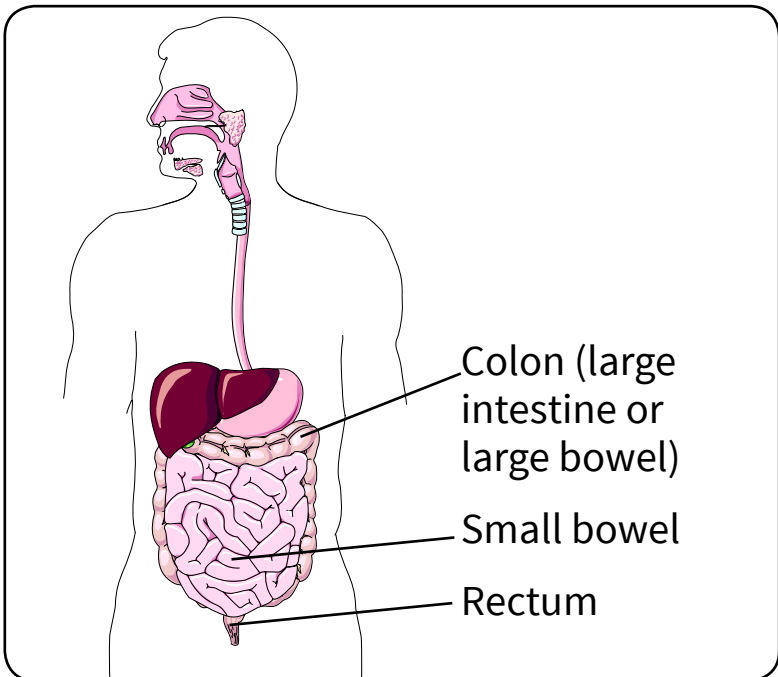
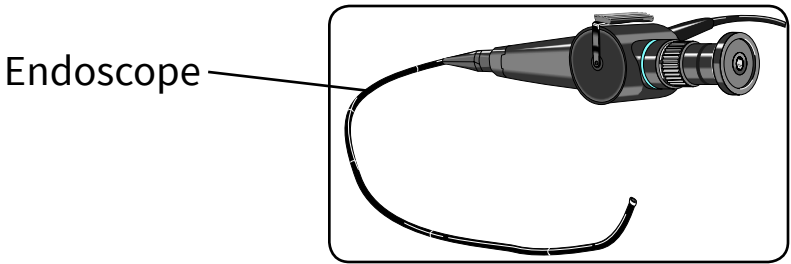


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# Colonoscopy: VG Site

## What is a colonoscopy?

This is an exam of the large bowel (also known as the large intestine or colon). The doctor uses a special tube (endoscope) with a small light and camera on the end that bends to look for any changes on the inside of your large bowel.



If you will be having sedation, a responsible adult must be present and stay in the hospital during your test. They must take you home and stay with you overnight.

## How do I get ready for my colonoscopy?

Before your test, it is **VERY** important that you:

- Consider taking a day off work to do your bowel prep (medicines to clean out your bowel). You should also plan a day off work for the day of your test. Most people can go back to work the day after their test.
- Your bowel **MUST** be empty. To do this test, the bowel must not have any stool or fluids that may make it hard to see the walls on the inside. If your bowel is not cleaned the right way, the exam will be less accurate or impossible to finish. **Your doctor will give you special instructions about cleaning your bowel. Please follow them carefully.**
- Do not eat seeds or kernels for 2 weeks before your test.
- Drink 3 to 4 litres (quarts) of CLEAR fluid such as water, sports drinks (that aren't red in colour), light-coloured soft drinks (Sprite, ginger ale, 7UP, etc.), tea (no milk), apple juice, or clear soup broth – and your bowel prep

liquid. This will make sure that your bowel is as clean as possible.

- Drink only **CLEAR** fluids on the day of the test.
- If you are diabetic and on medicine and/or insulin, talk with your doctor. You may need special instructions on taking these medicines before your test. Bring your blood testing supplies with you on the day of the test.
- Take all heart, blood pressure, or breathing medicine on the day of the test.
- Call your specialist before the test if you need any antibiotics for tests or dental work.
- Talk with the doctor if you are taking blood thinners, such as ASA (Aspirin<sup>®</sup>), Aspirin<sup>®</sup>-containing products or warfarin.
- Tell the doctor about any drug allergies you have.
- Please bring the health questionnaire sent in the mail.
- Bring a **list of all your medicines** to the test.
- **Do not** wear any jewelry or bring valuables to the hospital with you.
- **Do not** use any perfumed or scented products such as hairspray or scented deodorant before your visit.

**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.

## **Where do I go on the day of my test?**

The name of your specialist, date, time, and place of your test will be shared with you before the test. Parking is limited so be sure to allow plenty of time to park before your appointment.

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

## **How is the test done?**

- An intravenous (IV) will be started in your arm.
- We will give you medicine through your IV to help with any pain and help you relax just before the test is started.
- The specialist will put the scope into your rectum (bum).
- Your bowel will be inflated with air to help the doctor get a better look at the lining of your bowel. You may have some mild cramping or

pain. The air may feel like gas pain or like you want to move your bowels (like you need to have a poop).

- Your doctor may take out a polyp (see next section), or take a tissue sample during the exam. This will not hurt and is nothing to worry about.
- The test will take up to 60 minutes. Expect to spend about 30-45 minutes in the recovery room after that.

## **What are polyps and why are they taken out?**

- Polyps are small pieces of tissue protruding (poking) out of the bowel wall. They often look like a mushroom.
- If polyps are seen, they are usually taken out. If left alone, they may bleed or become cancerous.

## **How are polyps taken out?**

- They are taken out during the test by running an electrical current through a wire wrapped around the polyp.
- Taking out polyps (polypectomy) or taking tissue samples is painless because the inside of your bowel has no nerve endings.

## **What happens after my test is over?**

- You may feel the urge to have a bowel movement or pass gas. This is because of the air that was put into your bowel during the test. Please try to pass the gas. This feeling shouldn't last long.
- After a 30-45 minute stay in the recovery room, you may leave with a responsible adult.
- You may see traces of blood in your first couple of bowel movements. This is normal when a polyp is taken out or a tissue sample is taken.
  - › **If the bleeding is a lot, does not stop, or you also feel dizzy, call your doctor or go to the nearest emergency room.**

## **What do I need to know if I've had sedation?**

- **A responsible adult must take you home and care for you.**
- **They must come with you to the GI Unit on the 9th floor, Victoria Building, VG site. They must stay at the hospital the whole time you are there.**
- **Do not walk or take the bus home. You may take a taxi **only** if you go with a responsible adult who can help you if needed.**

### **For 24 hours after sedation**

- **Do not** drive a car or run 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 decisions.

### **Are there any risks with this test?**

A colonoscopy is a minor procedure with very little risk when done by a trained professional. As with any test, there are some things you should know:

- There is a 1 in 1,000 to a 1 in 2,000 chance of having a tear (perforation) through the bowel wall. Surgery may be needed to fix the tear.
- There is a 1 in 200-500 chance of bleeding if a polyp was taken out. There is a 1 in 10,000 chance of bleeding if a tissue sample was taken. The bleeding may stop on its own but may also need more treatment.
- There is a 1 in 1.8 million chance of getting an infection from the equipment used for this test, but this has never been reported in Canada.



- Small polyps may be missed up to 5-10% of the time, especially if the bowel prep was not done carefully.
- Some patients may develop a problem linked to the sedatives or if they had existing heart or lung disease before the test. Please tell your specialist if you've had any trouble with these issues in the past.
- Some patients may be sore where the IV was inserted. Do not worry if a lump forms at the IV site as this should go away on its own over a few weeks.
- Sometimes the test cannot be finished for technical reasons, or if the bowel was not cleaned out the right way before the test.
- Painkillers and blood thinners can make you bleed more. Please do not take these drugs for a week after the test if a polyp was removed or a tissue sample taken.

**What are your questions? Please ask your doctor and/or nurse, or call your specialist.**

**We are here to help you.**



### **Looking for more health information?**

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Contact your local public library for books, videos, magazines, and other resources.

For more information, go to <http://library.novascotia.ca>

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time: call 811 or visit <https://811.novascotia.ca>

Learn about other programs and services in your community: call 211 or visit <http://ns.211.ca>

*Nova Scotia Health Authority promotes a smoke-free, vape-free, and scent-free environment.*

*Please do not use perfumed products. Thank you!*

**Nova Scotia Health Authority**

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If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

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The information in this pamphlet is to be updated every 3 years or as needed.