



Patient & Family Guide  
2017

# Colonoscopy

Dartmouth General  
Hospital

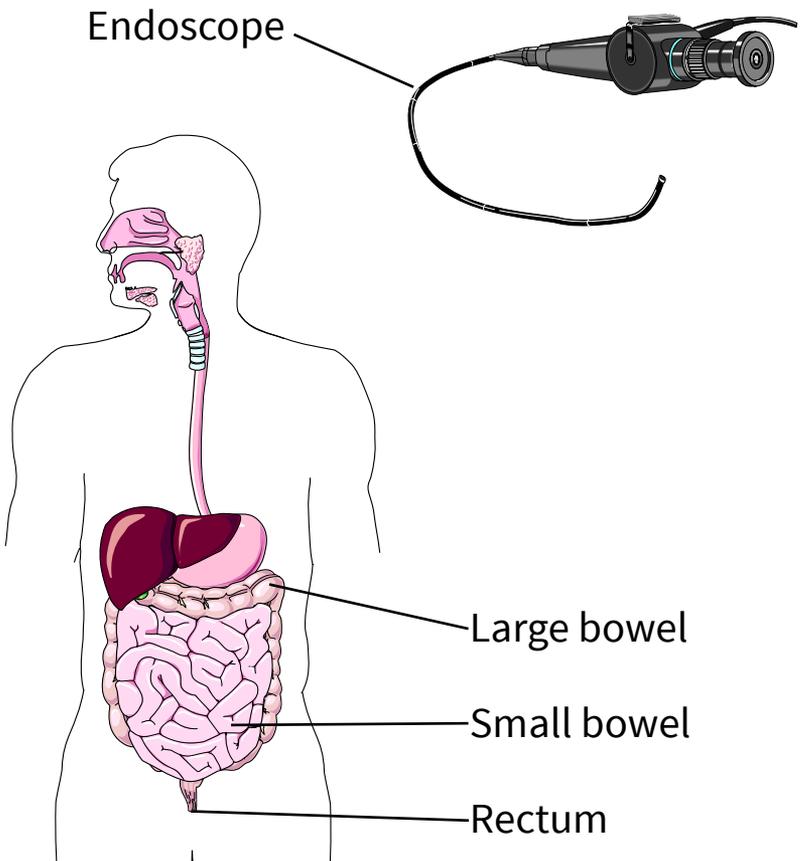


[www.nshealth.ca](http://www.nshealth.ca)

# Colonoscopy: Dartmouth General Hospital

## What is a colonoscopy?

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



## How do I get ready for my colonoscopy?

It is **VERY** important that you get ready by doing these things:

**If you will be getting sedation, you must have a responsible adult take you home and care for you after your test.** Please arrange for this ahead of time.

- You should 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 have this test, your bowel must be free of any stool (poop) and fluids that may make it hard to see the inside.
- If your bowel is not cleaned the right way, the test will be less accurate or impossible to do. The doctor will give you special instructions on cleaning your bowel. Please follow them.
- Do not eat seeds or kernels for **2 weeks** before your test.

- You are asked to drink 3 to 4 Litres of **CLEAR** fluid. Please confirm with your doctor's office when you should do this, as it depends on the time of your test. Clear fluids include:
  - › Water
  - › Sports drinks (that aren't red in colour)
  - › Tea (no milk)
  - › Apple juice
  - › Clear soup broth
  - › Light-coloured pop (such as Sprite®, ginger ale, 7UP®, etc.). Do not drink cola or dark-coloured pop
- You also need to drink your bowel prep liquid. This will make sure that your bowel is as clean as possible.

## **On the day of your test**

- Drink only **CLEAR** fluids.
- Take all of your usual heart, blood pressure or breathing medicine.
- 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.

- Tell the doctor if you are taking blood thinners, such as ASA (Aspirin®), products that contain ASA or Aspirin®, or warfarin.
- Tell the doctor about any drug allergies you may have.
- **Bring a list of your medicines to the test.**
- **Do not** wear any jewelry or bring any valuables with you. The hospital is not responsible for any lost items.
- **Do not** wear any perfumed products to the test. NSHA is scent-free and smoke-free.

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

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

- You will be given the date and time for your test.
- Please arrive 30 minutes before your test time.
- Go to Patient Registration, Main Floor, Dartmouth General Hospital.
- Bring your Provincial Health Card with you.

## 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 pain and to help you relax just before the test is started.
- The doctor will put the endoscope into your rectum (bum).
- The doctor will put air into your stomach through the endoscope. The air slightly inflates (makes bigger) your bowel, and helps the doctor get a clear look at the lining of your bowel. Adding the air may make you feel mild cramping, give you some gas or make you feel like you want to go to the bathroom.
- The doctor may wish to take a tissue sample or take out a polyp (small piece of tissue) during the test (see next page). This will not hurt and is nothing to worry about.

## **What are polyps and why are they removed?**

- Polyps are small pieces of tissue sticking out of the bowel wall. They often look like a mushroom.
- If the doctor sees a polyp, they will usually take it out. If a polyp is not taken out, it may bleed or become cancerous.

## **How are polyps removed?**

- Polyps are removed by running an electrical current through a wire wrapped around the polyp.
- Removing polyps (polypectomy) or taking tissue samples is painless, as the inside of your bowel has no nerve endings.

## What happens after my test is over?

- The test should take about 30 to 60 minutes.
- After a 30 to 45 minute stay in the recovery room, you may go home with a **responsible adult**.
- You may feel like going to the bathroom or passing 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.
- You may notice traces of blood in your first couple of bowel movements. This is normal when a polyp has been removed or a tissue sample has been taken.

**Call your family doctor or go to the nearest Emergency Department if you have any of the following after leaving the hospital:**

- › A large amount of bleeding
- › Bleeding that doesn't stop
- › Dizziness

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

- A responsible adult must take you home and care for you.
- The person who is taking you home **must** come to the Day Surgery Unit at the Dartmouth General Hospital.
- **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 the next 24 hours after sedation:

- Do not drive a car or run any heavy machinery.
- Do not drink alcohol.
- Do not care for others.
- Do not sign any legal or important papers.

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

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

- There is about a 1 in 1,000 to 1 in 2,000 chance of having a tear (perforation) through the lining of the bowel. Surgery may be needed to fix the tear.
- There is a 1 in 1,500 chance that bleeding may happen if a tissue sample was taken or a polyp was removed. This 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 the test, but this has not been reported in Canada.
- Some patients may develop problems because of the sedatives or any existing heart or lung diseases. Please tell your doctor if you've had any trouble with these types of issues in the past.

- Some people may be sore where the IV was put in. Don't worry if there is a lump 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 because the bowel has not been cleaned out the right way.

**What are your questions? Please ask your  
doctor or nurse.**

**We are here to help you.**

**Looking for more health information?**

Find this pamphlet and all our patient resources here: <http://library.nshealth.ca/PatientGuides>

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

For more information go to <http://library.novascotia.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**

[www.nshealth.ca](http://www.nshealth.ca)

*Prepared by: GI Unit, DGH ©*

*Illustrations by: LifeART Super Anatomy 1 Images, Copyright © 1994, TechPool Studios Corp. USA*

*Designed by: NSHA Library Services*

The information in this brochure is for informational and educational purposes only.

The information is not intended to be and does not constitute health care or medical advice.

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

DG85-1353 Updated October 2017

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