

What is it?

A colonoscopy uses a long, snake like tube with a light and camera to look inside the large bowel. It is inserted into the rectum and can take samples of tissue or growths that are found.

A doctor may suggest a colonoscopy if you have bowel problems or symptoms, or if you have done a bowel cancer screening test which has returned a positive result.

What do I need to do before the procedure?

There is a lot to prepare for when having a colonoscopy. A nurse will give you information on how to prepare. This includes:

- **Diet** - there are certain things you can and cannot eat. You must only have clear liquids the day before your procedure.
- **Medication** - you will be given medication that works like a strong laxative. It will remove all the solid waste from your bowel and cause diarrhea. You should stay close to a toilet when you take the medication.
- **Fluids** - the medication can make you feel dehydrated. The nurse will give you information on how to keep your fluids up.

What will happen?

You will be given a light anaesthetic for this procedure. The procedure takes 20-30 minutes to complete. Most patients can go home after it is finished.

What can I expect after?

After the procedure, you can eat and drink what feels comfortable. You are encouraged to drink lots of water and try to eat a well-balanced diet. You should also try to walk and be mobile.

If samples were taken, the results will not be ready by the time you leave. These will be discussed at your follow up appointment.

Complications from a colonoscopy are uncommon.

When should I be concerned?

Call your GP or Emergency Department right away if you have:

- Severe pain or cramping in your stomach or a hard belly
- Trouble passing wind or a bowel motion
- Fever, dizziness or vomiting
- Frequent or severe bloody bowel motions
- More than one tablespoon of bleeding or rectal bleeding that will not stop

Where can I learn more?

- **HealthDirect** – colonoscopy: healthdirect.gov.au
- **Cancer Council** – colonoscopy: cancer.org.au
- **Bowel Cancer Australia** – a quality colonoscopy: bowelcanceraustralia.org