

Colonoscopy (adults)

Introduction

A colonoscopy is an examination to look at the mucous membrane of the entire large intestine and possibly the last section of the small intestine. A flexible tube of 1 cm thickness (colonoscope), which has a camera and a light at the end, is inserted via the rectum.

Preparation at home

It is important that the intestine is properly cleaned before the study. For this you got with an intestinal cleansing agent (MOVIPREP). Follow the instructions contained in the enclosed brochure properly. For optimal intestine cleansing starting two days before the examination with a low-fiber diet. You can also read about the recommendations in the enclosed brochure.

You can take medicines you normally take, apart from:

- medication for diabetes: consult in advance with your doctor.
- blood thinners: consult in advance with your doctor.
- iron deficiency medication (*Ferrous Fumarate* or *Ferro Gradumet*): must be stopped a week before the examination.

During the examination it is best to wear comfortable clothing.

Preparation in the hospital

In principle the examination takes place under sedation. This sedation consists of a sleeping drug and a pain killer which are administered via a drip into the

bloodstream. The extent to which the sedation affects people varies. Some people fall asleep, while others are only drowsy. The sedation is intended to make you more relaxed and feel less pain.

If you would rather not be sedated, you may, of course, indicate this in advance.

Examination

The examination takes about half an hour. During the examination you are placed on your left side. The colonoscope is slowly inserted via the rectum.

During the examination air is blown into the intestine to stretch it and get a good view. This may cause you to have:

- a bloated feeling and cramps;
- an urge to empty your bowels.

During the examination an electronic monitoring device is placed on your finger to monitor your heart beat and the oxygen level in your blood.

If you are experiencing any pain during the examination, it is important to let us know immediately. We may be able to administer extra pain killers.

If necessary, a piece of tissue (biopsy) or a polyp (type of swelling) will be removed. You will not feel anything.

After the examination

If you have been sedated, you recover in the department. Your blood pressure will be checked for a short period.

Two hours after you received sedation, you may go home. You may:

- only go home if accompanied by a family member or friend;
- definitely not take part in traffic by yourself.

We recommend that you spend the rest of the day at home.

After the examination some patients experience a full or bloated feeling, or light cramps. This should stop after 24 hours.

The results

The gastroenterologist or internist is usually able to give preliminary results immediately after the examination. Any tissue results are not immediately available. The doctor will make further appointments with you to discuss these.

Risks involved in the examination

A colonoscopy is a safe examination. However, there are rare cases where complications occur (problems during the examination). This only happens in less than 1 in a 1000 people. If extremely large polyps are removed, the risk of problems is greater: 1 in a 100 patients.

Possible problems:

- Damage to the intestine wall (perforation). Damage like this usually heals by itself. In some cases an operation is required.
- Continued bleeding after a biopsy or removal of polyps. Most bleeds can easily be treated during the examination by searing a bleeding vein without you noticing anything. Sometimes a blood transfusion (administering donor blood) or a second colonoscopy is required. An operation is hardly every required.
- Some abnormalities may not be detected during the colonoscopy.

Alternatives

An alternative to view the intestine is by a CT scan (CT colonoscopy). This can trace polyps, tumours and blockages.

Disadvantages of a CT scan are:

- smaller polyps may be missed;
- the intestine wall cannot be inspected (infections and wounds cannot be seen);
- it is not possible to remove polyps or tissue. If any abnormalities are suspected, a colonoscopy will then have to be carried out to be certain (and to treat them).

Questions

We strongly urge you to discuss all your questions and concerns with the doctor in advance.

Contact with the hospital

We would stress that you contact the hospital immediately if any of the following occurs:

- blood loss;
- severe abdominal pain;
- any other problems.

You can reach us 24 hours a day via the hospital's general telephone number (020 - 755 7000).

Notes on this leaflet

If any information in this leaflet is unclear or incomplete, please notify us. You can share your remarks with us via voorlichting@zha.nl.