Colonoscopy:
Hants Community Hospital
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.
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 ask a responsible adult to take you home and care for you.**

- You may wish to take a day off work when taking 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 return to work the day after their test.

- Your bowel **MUST** be empty. To carry out this test, the bowel must be free of any stool and 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 on cleaning your bowel so please follow them carefully.

- 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 – as well as your bowel prep liquid. This will make sure that your bowel is as clean as possible.

- Do not eat seeds or kernels for 2 weeks before your test.
• 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.

• If you need antibiotics for tests or dental work, call your specialist before the test.

• Talk with your doctor if you are taking blood thinners, such as ASA (Aspirin®), Aspirin®-containing products like Tylenol, or warfarin.

• Tell your doctor about any drug allergies you may have.

• Please bring the health questionnaire sent in the mail.

• 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.
• If you need to cancel your test, please call your specialist at least 3 days (72 hours) beforehand. 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.

How is the test done?
• An intravenous (IV) will be started in your arm.

• We will give you medicine through your IV to ease pain and help you relax just before the test is started.

• The scope will be put into your rectum (back passage) by the specialist.

• The bowel will be inflated with air to help your doctor get a better look at the lining of the bowel. This may give you some mild cramping or pain. The air may feel like gas pain or like you want to move your bowels.

• Your doctor may wish to 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 (often look like a mushroom).

• Most often, if polyps are seen, they are taken out. If left alone, they may bleed or become cancerous.

How are polyps taken out?

• They are taken out at the time of 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 due to 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 to 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. But, if the bleeding is a large amount, does not go away, or goes along with dizziness, **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.**

• The person who is taking you home **must** come with you to the unit for your test. They should also stay in the hospital the whole time you are having your test.

• **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.

• **Do not** sign any legal or important papers for the next 24 hours.

• **Do not** drink any alcohol for the next 24 hours.

• **Do not** drive a car or run any heavy machinery for the next 24 hours.

• **Do not** take care of others for the next 24 hours.
Are there any risks with this test?

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

• There is about a 1 in 1000 to a 1 in 2000 chance of having a tear (perforation) through the bowel wall. Surgery may be needed to fix the tear.

• There is a 1 in 200 to 500 chance that bleeding may happen if a polyp has been taken out. There is a 1 in 10,000 chance bleeding may happen 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 the test, but this has not been reported in Canada.

• Small polyps may be missed up to 5-10% of the time, mostly if the bowel prep was poor.

• Some patients may develop a problem linked to the sedatives or if they had any existing heart or lung disease before the test. Please tell your specialist if you’ve had any trouble with these types of issues in the past. Some may also notice soreness 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 procedure 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 stay away from these drugs for a week after the test if a polyp was removed or a tissue sample taken.

If you have any questions or concerns, please talk them over with your doctor and/or nurse, or call your specialist. We are all here to help you.
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If you have any questions, please ask your healthcare provider.

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