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COLORECTAL SURGERY  
LAPAROSCOPIC SURGERY  
COLONOSCOPY

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## **COLONOSCOPY – WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT**

### **What is a colonoscope?**

A colonoscope is a flexible instrument approximately 1 metre in length and 1-2cm in diameter. It is passed via the anus into the rectum and is then manoeuvred through the remainder of the large bowel.

### **What is colonoscopy?**

Colonoscopy is an invasive procedure which enables the lining of the large bowel to be examined. Unlike x-rays which take photographs, colonoscopy allows direct visual examination of the interior of the bowel and, in most instances, can provide substantially more detail and accuracy than an x-ray. The procedure is performed with the patient asleep under the care of a specialist anaesthetist and may take in the order of 30 minutes.

Sometimes small samples (biopsies) are removed from the lining of the bowel so that they can be examined under a microscope to determine if there is any abnormality or pathology. In addition, if early growths called "polyps" are present in the bowel, they will usually be removed at the time of colonoscopy. If this is not done there is a possibility the polyps can develop into bowel cancer. It is possible that removal of a polyp could be necessary at any colonoscopy as the need to do so cannot always be predicted.

### **What preparation is necessary?**

For colonoscopy to be successfully undertaken it is very important that the bowel is thoroughly emptied and clean. To do this a bowel preparation is used and directions for its use are included in a separate instruction sheet. Please note that this preparation is taken orally the day before your examination, and can be obtained from Cabrini pharmacy or your local pharmacy.

### **What about my normal medication?**

You should have your normal medications at the normal time on the day of the examination. Iron and Aspirin tablets should not be taken for four days prior to the procedure. The effect of the oral contraceptive pill may be lost because of the bowel preparation and colonoscopy and alternative contraception should be used for ten days.

If you are on blood thinning drugs then they will need to cease prior to the procedure. This should be discussed with Professor Polglase's office or your GP.

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### **What about my normal medications ? (cont.)**

This list is an example of *some* of the medications which need to be ceased well before your colonoscopy.

Aspirin (Astrix, Cartia, Disprin, Solprin)  
Warfarin (Coumadin, Marevan)  
Clopidogrel (Iscover, Plavix)  
Some naturopathy medications (Glikobiolba, garlic, St John's wort)

In some instance they need to be ceased up to 2 weeks prior to and should not be recommenced for up to 2 weeks after a polypectomy procedure.

### **Are there complications?**

The risk of complications from colonoscopy is small and is approximately 1:2000. The type of problem which can occur may include bleeding and/or damage from or to the wall of the bowel with or without polypectomy. It is possible that such a complication could require surgical treatment.

If you are intending travelling out of Australia within two weeks of a colonoscopy, which could involve a polypectomy or having elastic band ligation of haemorrhoids, then it should be done no closer than two (2) weeks prior to departure because of the small chance of bleeding.

### **What is the follow up?**

An interim report will be available to you as soon as you wake up from the anaesthetic in the recovery area. A further report and written advice will arrive in the mail within a few days of the procedure. If polyps have been removed from the bowel then further check colonoscopies may be in order, and arrangements will need to be made in this regard.

Your doctor will always receive a written report on the procedure. Sometimes a consultation will be necessary to discuss the findings of colonoscopy and any possible implications for treatment.

### **Special points for consideration**

Intravenous analgesia and sedation is administered by an anaesthetist so that you will be asleep and the procedure will be carried out without discomfort. Because of the sedation given, it is very important that you do not drive a car, travel on public transport alone, operate machinery, sign legal documents or drink alcohol on the same day as the test.

Should you require a medical certificate please notify the rooms prior to the procedure.