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COLON AND RECTAL SURGERY  
COLONOSCOPY AND GASTROSCOPY  
LAPAROSCOPIC SURGERY

GASTROINTESTINAL PHYSIOLOGY

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## COLONOSCOPY : PATIENT INSTRUCTIONS AND INFORMATION

**It is vitally important that you read these instructions carefully as soon as you receive them and prior to the day of your appointment. Call 9500 0154 if you have any queries.**

**You need to ensure that you have confirmed your appointment time, and whether you are having your colonoscopy at either :**

 **Cabrini Hospital Day Procedure Centre, Isabella St, Malvern 3144. OR:**

 **Waverley Private Hospital, 351 Blackburn Rd. Mount Waverley 3149.**

### **What is colonoscopy ?**

Colonoscopy is a procedure performed by your surgeon to assess your colon. A flexible tube, 6 feet in length is passed through the anus, and allows your surgeon to visualise the internal lining of your entire colon.

### **Why do we do colonoscopy ?**

The internal lining of the colon is the site of many disease processes, including tumours. Colonoscopy thus allows your surgeon to diagnose or exclude these diseases. In general, cancer of the colon is preceded by a polyp, or a benign growth. Your surgeon can remove these polyps, and thus reduce your risk of later developing cancer.

### **What are polyps ?**

Polyps are small, benign (non cancerous) growths of the lining of the colon. They vary in size between 2 mm and 5 cm. Some polyps will develop into a cancer if not removed. Colonoscopy is the only non surgical technique for removing colon polyps. They are removed at colonoscopy by the use of a "snare": a type of instrument which resembles a lasso. Usually, a small amount of electrical current is used to prevent the polyp from bleeding.

### **What does the procedure involve ?**

You are brought into the hospital, generally into the Day Procedure Centre, for a period of around 3 hours. The procedure itself takes only 20 minutes. You are not given a general anaesthetic, but a drip is inserted into a vein in your arm or hand, by an anaesthetist. He or she will administer to you a small dose of sedative, so that you will sleep through the procedure. You may still be aware of the procedure taking place, and may feel some discomfort, but this is generally minor. Generally, your memory of the procedure is very limited, and you may not even remember talking to staff in the Centre. For this reason, you will always be contacted by mail after your colonoscopy, even though your surgeon will speak to you after the test is completed. **Because you are sedated during your colonoscopy, you must make plans to be driven home by a relative or friend after your procedure.**

### **Are there alternatives to colonoscopy ?**

Colonoscopy is the only non surgical test that allows visualisation of the lining of the colon. It thus also allows your surgeon to biopsy the lining of the colon (that is, to take a small sample of the colon to observe under a microscope.) This allows certain diagnosis of any disease of the colon in most cases.

A "barium enema" is an alternative to colonoscopy. In this test, you are administered an enema, and then x-rays of the colon are taken. This test yields some of the information that is obtained at colonoscopy, but does not allow full visualisation of the lining of the colon, nor does it allow biopsy.

### **What are the risks of colonoscopy ?**

The risks are very small. In approximately 0.1% of cases (1 in 1,500 patients), bleeding can develop, or the wall of the colon can be ruptured by the scope. This is more likely if a polyp is being removed at the time. In these cases, it is usually necessary for the patient to undergo an immediate operation to repair the colon. Rarely, the patient will need a colostomy "bag" as a result of damage to the colon. The risk of death from colonoscopy is extremely small.

**If you do not understand these risks, or want more information contact Mr McMurrick prior to the day of your colonoscopy**



## How do I prepare for colonoscopy ?

Preparation for colonoscopy is very simple, but vitally important if your test is to be successful.

**When you first see your surgeon and the colonoscopy is booked :**



**It is important that you tell your doctor if you have a significant heart condition prior to the day of the examination. Heart disease does not prevent you from undergoing colonoscopy, but letting your surgeon know in advance may help in planning which medications you are given during your test. It is also very important that you tell your doctor if you have an artificial heart valve, or a condition which requires you to take antibiotics prior to seeing a dentist. You must let your surgeon know if you have any allergies to medications or drugs.**

### **Two days before your colonoscopy**

Visit your local pharmacist and purchase 2 sachets of **PICOLAX**. Stop taking iron supplements. Continue with your regular medications. Stop eating meat, seeds, nuts, cereal, vegetables or fibre supplements eg Metamucil . You may eat boiled or poached eggs, white meat or fish, well cooked peeled pumpkin or potatoe. You may eat/drink skim milk products.

### **The day before the colonoscopy**

You may continue this light diet up until lunch, then FROM MIDDAY have no solid food or milk products. You may eat/drink only "clear fluids" after midday (e.g.. Water, sugar free jelly, Lucozade, Gatorade, cordial, black tea or coffee, clear soup or broth, bonox.)

**FIRST DOSE OF PICOLAX** should be taken at 1.00pm. Mix the entire sachet with a large glass of water. Stir until the effervescence ceases, then drink the solution. You should then aim at drinking at least one glass of water each hour until retiring for sleep.

**SECOND DOSE OF PICOLAX** should be taken at 7.00 pm.

If your colonoscopy is booked for the following morning, you may take clear fluids till midnight, then not take anything orally, except for your usual medications with a sip of water.

If your colonoscopy is booked for the following afternoon, you may take clear fluids until 7am on the morning of your colonoscopy except for your usual medications with a sip of water.

### **Warnings:**



If you are taking any blood thinning medications, you must warn your doctor at least one week prior to the test. These medications include warfarin. Also, you must not take any aspirin for at least 5 days before the test. If you need pain relief, you may use panadol. If you are taking aspirin to thin the blood, discuss this with your surgeon prior to stopping the medication.

### **On the day of colonoscopy**

Turn up to the Day Procedure Centre at the time designated. If you are unsure of the time, please call Suite 20 to confirm arrangements. You must not drink or eat anything for 6 hours prior to the test.

## **What should I expect during the colonoscopy ?**

It is normal for you to be awake during the test, and for you to experience some minor discomfort. You may feel bloated, as a result of the gas which is pumped into your colon to allow better vision. You should not experience severe pain.

### **After the colonoscopy**

You will feel sleepy for several hours. It is normal for you to pass large amounts of gas, and to feel some bloating. Walking will often relieve this discomfort. You may pass a small amount of blood in your first stool. An instruction sheet will be given to you after the test is completed.

## **How often should I undergo colonoscopy ?**

This depends on the results of your test, and will be discussed with you after colonoscopy is completed.

## **What if I don't have health insurance ?**

You should contact Suite 20 to obtain a quotation for the cost of "self insured" colonoscopy.