

Department of radiology

# CT colonography scan

## Introduction

This information tells you about CT colonography. This is a test to look inside your abdomen and bowel for any abnormality. This leaflet explains how the test is done, the risks involved and what to expect.

It is very important you read all the information when you receive this appointment. The Christie Pharmacy will send you the bowel preparation (Picolax) for this examination separately. If this does not arrive within a couple of days, please ring the Pat Seed department on **0161 446 3884**.

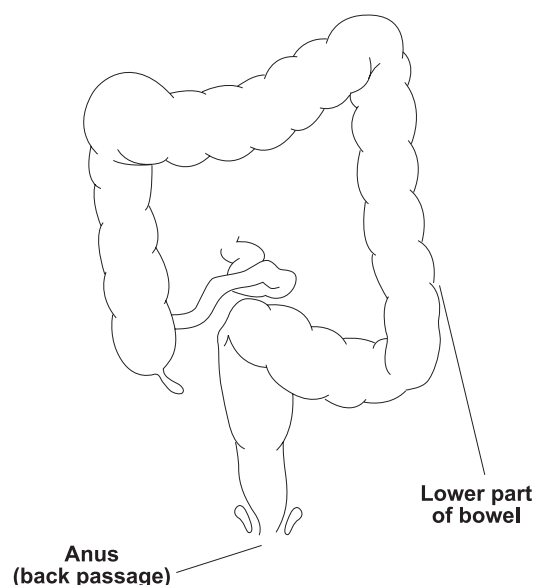
## What if I cannot keep my appointment for a CT colonography?

If you cannot keep your appointment, please let the Pat Seed department know straight away on **0161 446 3884**. If you are admitted to hospital before your appointment, please tell the ward staff that you have an appointment booked.

## What is a CT colonography scan?

This scan uses a CT scanner to produce two dimensional images of the whole of the large bowel (colon and rectum). CT stands for computed tomography which is a way of using X-rays to produce images of a 'slice' through a part of the body. During a CT colonography scan, air or carbon dioxide is used to inflate the bowel via a thin flexible tube placed in your back passage. You will then most likely have two CT scans – first lying on your front and then on your back. In this way, the doctors can then look at the images for polyps, narrowed areas and signs of cancer.

**Diagram of the large bowel**



## Are there alternatives to a CT colonography?

There are two alternative ways of looking at the large bowel either by a barium enema or an endoscopy.

- Barium enema has been available for many years but does not provide as much information and is less comfortable for patients. At The Christie, CT colonography has replaced the barium enema.
- Endoscopy, where a thin tube with a camera on the end (colonoscope) is passed into the back passage and moved up and around the bowel, remains as a standard test for the large bowel. It is more invasive than this CT scan and usually requires sedation. However, it does allow tissue biopsy or polyp removal if needed. In our hospital, CT colonography may be used to give additional information after an incomplete colonoscopy.

## What do I have to do before my CT colonography?

If there is any chance you may be pregnant, please contact the department **before** starting the preparation for this scan.

If you are diabetic, please contact us for advice **before** starting any bowel preparation.

## Taking tablets and medicines

If you take Metformin (Glucophage) tablets for diabetes, please let us know as soon as you receive this appointment.

## Is there any preparation for my CT colonography scan?

To give us a clear view of the bowel lining, your bowel has to be prepared before the test. This involves clearing the bowel of stool (faeces) using strong laxatives. The final section of this leaflet will give you more information about the bowel preparation. There are also instructions about your diet – what you should or should not eat before your test. It is very important that you follow this preparation carefully.

## What happens during a CT colonography scan?

- The radiographer will explain the test and answer any questions. Please let them know if you have had any problems with your bowel preparation. We will ask you to undress in a cubicle. There is a cotton gown to wear. You may wish to bring a dressing gown with you.
- The procedure will usually take about 20 minutes.
- You may have a cannula (a small plastic tube) inserted into one of the veins in your arm.
- We will ask you to lie down on the scanner table on your left side.
- The radiographer or radiologist (doctor) will pass a short, thin flexible tube into your back passage.
- A muscle relaxant (Buscopan) may be injected through the cannula to avoid bowel spasm.
- Air or carbon dioxide will be gently introduced into your bowel through the tube in your back passage.
- Despite the muscle relaxant, you may still feel some bloating and mild discomfort in your abdomen like 'bad wind'.
- When the radiographer or radiologist is satisfied with the amount of gas in your large bowel, a CT scan will be taken with you lying on your front.
- You may then be asked to turn on to your back for a second scan. Then we may give you an iodine-based intravenous contrast (X-ray dye) via the cannula. You may feel a warm sensation during this injection.
- Each scan will take about 10 to 20 seconds (1 breath hold).

## What happens after my CT colonography scan?

After the scan has been completed the radiographer or radiologist will remove the tube from the back passage and you will be able to get off the scan table. We ask that you remain in the hospital for 30 minutes after your scan, just to make sure you are feeling all right. It is normal to pass 'wind' at this time.

The radiologist will send a report of your scan to the referring consultant at The Christie. It will be available a week after your appointment.

## Are there any risks?

CT scanners use more radiation than simple X-rays to give the doctor more information. We think the benefits of this scan outweigh the risks of the exposure to radiation. The information obtained from the scan may help with diagnosis or to plan your treatment. A CT colonography scan is generally regarded as a very safe test. Problems occur rarely, and if they do, they are similar to those which could happen with other methods of examining the large bowel. These include the following:

- abdominal discomfort
- 'faint-like' reactions
- reactions to the injected contrast
- damage to the bowel wall (a small tear in the lining of the colon or rectum may occur rarely, in fewer than 1 in 3,000 tests).

As with all medication, a small number of people may be allergic to the contrast injection (X-ray dye). Please tell the radiographer if you have any allergies.

If you have severe abdominal pains or bleeding from the back passage that is persistent or severe, including blood clots, in the 48 hours after the test, then you should get in touch with your GP straight away.

If you need further information, please phone the department and ask to speak to a radiographer on **0161 446 3884** (Monday to Friday, 9:00am – 5:00pm).

## Preparation for CT colonography-bowel preparation

To examine your bowel properly, it must be clean and free from faeces (motions/stools). To do this, you must change your diet and take a laxative provided to produce loose motions and stools.

### 7 days before colonography:

- Stop taking iron or aspirin tablets

### 3 days before colonography:

- Do not take bran or high roughage foods.
- You can eat low fibre foods including the following:
  - milk (2 cups a day), plain yogurt, cheese, butter, margarine
  - white fish or chicken (boiled, steamed or grilled)
  - eggs, tofu
  - white pasta, white rice
  - white bread, white pitta, white flour chapattis
  - potatoes with no skin (mashed or boiled)
  - clear soups no solid bits such as sieved chicken noodle, Bovril or Oxo
  - clear jelly, boiled sweets or ice cream
  - salt, pepper, sugar, sweetners and honey
- Continue all other medication as normal. (If you are on warfarin or you are diabetic please contact us as soon as possible).

### **The day before colonography:**

- Please do not eat solid foods from 12:01am on the day before the colonography.
- Follow the instructions enclosed with the Picolax.
- At 8:00am – 9:00am take one sachet of Picolax (enclosed) in a glass of water.
- At 3:00pm – 4:00pm take the second sachet of Picolax as before.
- Take plenty of fluids such as clear soup, Bovril, strained fruit juice, tea and coffee (with no milk). Drink plenty to avoid becoming dehydrated but do not eat any solid food.  
**We advise you to drink at least one glass of water every hour after taking the first dose of Picolax. Continue this until bedtime.**
- Avoid milk, fruit and puddings.

### **PLEASE NOTE:**

Picolax is a strong laxative which will cause diarrhoea and empty the bowel. It is wise to stay close to a toilet once you have taken this medicine. Avoid travelling or going to work. If you are concerned or worried during preparation for your colonography do not hesitate to contact the hospital or your doctor for advice.

### **On the day of the colonography:**

- Continue to take plenty of clear fluids until 4 hours before the test.

### **Fluids allowed:**

You may dilute fruit juice with water or soda water. You may add sugar or glucose to your drinks, but avoid fizzy drinks as they may make you feel bloated. You may choose from the following list:

- tea with lemon (sugar if desired)
- black coffee (sugar if desired)
- water
- tomato juice
- grapefruit juice
- orange juice (strained if fresh fruit used)
- pineapple juice
- blackcurrant juice
- fruit squash
- Oxo, Bovril, Marmite (weak)
- stock cubes
- soups and broths (sieved)
- consommé
- jelly (containing no fruit)

### **Fluids forbidden:**

- You must not have milk or any drinks containing milk.

### **Contacts**

Pat Seed department (department 11) – **0161 446 3884**

If you need information in a different format, such as easy read, large print, BSL, braille, email, SMS text or other communication support, please tell your ward or clinic nurse.

The Christie is committed to producing high quality, evidence based information for patients. Our patient information adheres to the principles and quality statements of the Information Standard. If you would like to have details about the sources used please contact **[the-christie.patient.information@nhs.net](mailto:the-christie.patient.information@nhs.net)**

For information and advice visit the cancer information centres at Withington, Oldham or Salford. Opening times can vary, please check before making a special journey.



Contact The Christie Hotline for  
urgent support and specialist advice  
**The Christie Hotline: 0161 446 3658**  
Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week