



# Having a colonoscopy

A guide for patients and their carers



# Your information checklist: colonoscopy

It is very important that you read this booklet. If you need further information please do not hesitate to contact the department – you will find a phone number at the end of this booklet.

Please tick the following and sign below:

I have read this booklet Yes  No

I understand the information it contains Yes  No

I am aware that biopsies may be taken or polyps may be removed during this test Yes  No

I am aware of the risk of bleeding and/or perforation Yes  No

I am aware that I will have the opportunity to ask further questions when I attend for my appointment.

A colonoscopy can be carried out under sedation. This is given by injection and it will make you feel sleepy and relaxed, although you may not be completely asleep.

However, you do have the option to have the colonoscopy carried out without sedation. If you do not have sedation you will also be given the option of having 'gas and air'.

Signed .....

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## Christie website

For more information about The Christie and our services, please visit **[www.christie.nhs.uk](http://www.christie.nhs.uk)** or visit the cancer information centres at Withington, Oldham or Salford.

## Welcome to the integrated procedures unit

Your doctor or nurse practitioner has recommended that you have a colonoscopy. This is a procedure to look at the lining of your large bowel.

We want to make you as comfortable as possible during your stay. This booklet answers commonly asked questions about colonoscopy. If you have more questions, or if there is anything that you do not understand, please ask when you attend for the colonoscopy or phone **0161 918 2420**.

When you arrive at The Christie please report to the integrated procedures unit (IPU), department 2. Your stay on the unit will usually be for a couple of hours. Sometimes you may need to be here longer if the department is very busy, so it is better for you to put aside the whole morning or afternoon. Please plan to arrive at the integrated procedures unit no more than 15 minutes before your appointment time.

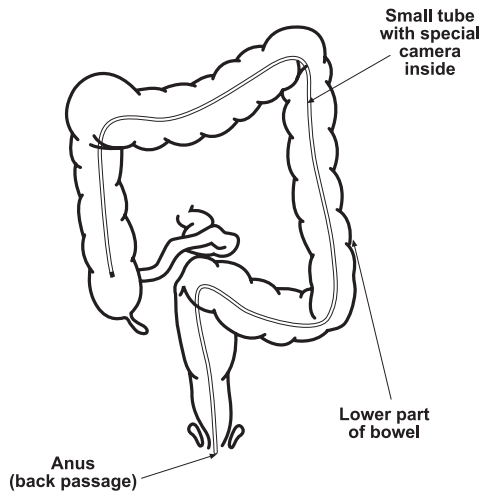
As you may be having an injection to sedate you (to make you sleepy) and usually a painkiller, you will need to have a responsible adult to accompany you and stay with you for 24 hours after the test.

## What is a colonoscopy?

A colonoscopy is a procedure to look at the lining of the back passage (rectum) and large bowel (colon). The bowel is a large tube with bends in it. A small flexible tube, about as thick as your finger, will be passed into your back passage to look at the inside lining of your bowel. Some air will be put into your bowel during the examination, to make it easier to see the lining.

## What is the benefit of a colonoscopy?

The main benefit of a colonoscopy is that it helps to plan the best treatment for you.



## Why do I need a colonoscopy?

The doctor or nurse practitioner may take biopsies (samples) during the procedure to obtain exact information about any abnormalities seen. Small lesions or polyps can be completely removed, and if you have haemorrhoids (piles), these can often be treated at the same time.

## Are there any alternatives to a colonoscopy?

An alternative to a colonoscopy could be a CT colonogram and a flexible sigmoidoscopy. This depends on the reasons for your examination. Your doctor or nurse practitioner will discuss this with you.

## What happens if I decide not to have a colonoscopy?

The symptoms may persist, and it may be hard to reach a diagnosis.

## Is colonoscopy safe?

Colonoscopy and biopsy is a safe procedure, but there is a very small chance (1 in 1,000) of damaging the bowel during the test, particularly if you have a biopsy or a polyp

removed. If this happens it is sometimes necessary to repair it with an operation.

If polyps or haemorrhoids have been treated, some bleeding can occur. The commonest side effect is bloating and flatulence, because of the air which is pumped into the bowel.

Although complications of colonoscopy and biopsy are rare, contact us if you notice any of these symptoms in the 48 hours after the test:

- severe abdominal pains
- bleeding from the back passage that is persistent or severe including blood clots

## What must I do before my colonoscopy?

### **Bowel preparation**

It is important that your bowel is empty so that we can get a clear view of the lining of your bowel wall. We will give you separate information with instructions. Follow this very carefully as good bowel preparation will help the doctor or nurse practitioner to get a better view.

If you are diabetic, we will send you specific instructions about taking your bowel preparation.

If you are on Warfarin, Clopidogrel or any other medication to thin your blood, or if you are diabetic, please contact us as soon as possible on **0161 918 2420**.

### **Preparation for colonoscopy**

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

## 7 days before colonoscopy

- stop taking iron tablets

## 3 days before colonoscopy

- do not take bran or high roughage foods

## The day before colonoscopy

Bowel preparation uses 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.

## Taking tablets or medicines

Take your prescribed tablets as usual but:

- stop taking iron tablets 7 days before your test
- if you take Warfarin, Clopidogrel or any other medication to thin your blood, let the doctor or nurse know as soon as possible. Please phone **0161 918 2420**.

Please let us know if you have any of the following as we may need to make special arrangements:

- diabetes
- glaucoma
- had a heart attack in the last 6 months
- waiting for heart surgery
- waiting for coronary angioplasty
- a pacemaker/defibrillator
- any allergies
- ever had a reaction to an anaesthetic or medication

## Will I feel anything during the colonoscopy?

The doctor or nurse practitioner will give you the option to have the colonoscopy with or without an injection to sedate you. If you do not have sedation you will be given the option of having 'gas and air'. If you have the sedation injection it will make you feel sleepy and relax you, although you may not be completely asleep. The sedation can sometimes stop you remembering the test itself.

You will need to stay in the department until the sedation has completely worn off. You may feel some bloating or stomach cramps because of the air that is put into your bowel but these will go when the air is let out after your examination.

## What happens during the colonoscopy?

The examination will usually take about 30 - 40 minutes. The examination can only be carried out if you have taken the bowel preparation the day before.

- The doctor or nurse practitioner will explain the test and answer any questions
- Please remind them if you are allergic to anything that you know of.
- We will ask you to sign a consent form.
- The nurse will ask you to put on a gown and to lie in a comfortable position on your left side.
- The doctor or nurse practitioner may give you an injection with a painkiller to make you sleepy, usually into a vein in your hand or arm.
- The doctor will pass a colonoscope (small tube) into your back passage and air will be put gently into your bowel.



- You may feel that you want to go to the toilet, but because the bowel is empty there is no danger of this happening. You may pass small amounts of wind. Don't be embarrassed, this is common.

The doctor or nurse practitioner will be looking for any signs of cancer or any area that looks different from the rest of the bowel. If any are found, he/she will take a biopsy (tiny piece) of the lining of the bowel to examine under a microscope. Sometimes polyps are found. Polyps are small growths that develop from the lining of the bowel. Some polyps need to be removed and it is usually possible to do this at the same time as your test.

After your colonoscopy the doctor or nurse practitioner will talk to you about the examination and about what will happen next. If you have had the injection, it is possible that you may not remember all the details of what you are told. If you wish, ask the doctor or nurse to speak to whoever is accompanying you.

## What happens after the colonoscopy?

- You will be taken to a recovery area.
- The staff will monitor you until you are fully awake. You can then go home with a responsible adult in a car or taxi.
- The nursing staff will tell you when you can eat and drink.
- If you need any follow up, we will send you an appointment through the post.

## When you go home

You have the option to have the colonoscopy unsedated, using gas and air, or with sedation. If you have sedation you must have an adult stay with you for 24 hours after the test.

### When you have sedation you must not:

- travel home on public transport
- drive or operate machinery for 24 hours after the test
- be left alone to care for small children for 24 hours after the test
- sign legal documents for 24 hours
- drink alcohol for 24 hours
- return to work for 24 hours after the test. If you have a colonoscopy in the afternoon you should not return to work until the second day after your test.

## Contacting The Christie

If you need any more information, or you are worried about any part of your care, please do not hesitate to contact us:

- the integrated procedures unit (department 2) on **0161 918 2420**
- out of hours (7:30pm - 7:30am) – ring the surgical oncology unit on **0161 446 3860**

We will do our best to make your visit as comfortable and stress free as possible. If you need more information or have suggestions about the care you have received, please call us on **0161 918 2420**.

## Student training

The Christie is a training hospital for postgraduate and undergraduate trainees so you may meet students in all areas of the hospital. We train doctors, nurses, radiographers and other therapists in the treatment and care of cancer patients.

Placements at The Christie are an important part of student training, so by allowing them to assist in your care, you will be making a valuable contribution to student education.

Students are always supervised by fully qualified staff. However, you have the right to decide if students can take part in your care. If you prefer them not to, please tell the doctor, nurse, radiographer or other therapist in charge as soon as possible. You have a right to do this and your treatment will not be affected in any way.

We also try to respect the concerns of patients in relation to the gender of their doctor and other health professionals.

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 [patient.information@christie.nhs.uk](mailto:patient.information@christie.nhs.uk)

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

### Visit the Cancer Information Centre

The Christie at Withington **0161 446 8100**

The Christie at Oldham **0161 918 7745**

The Christie at Salford **0161 918 7804**

Open Monday to Friday, 10am – 4pm.

Opening times can vary, please ring to check  
before making a special journey.

### The Christie NHS Foundation Trust

Wilmslow Road  
Manchester M20 4BX

**0161 446 3000**

**[www.christie.nhs.uk](http://www.christie.nhs.uk)**



The Christie Patient Information Service  
February 2020– Review February 2023

CHR/SUR/175/07.11.02 Version 8