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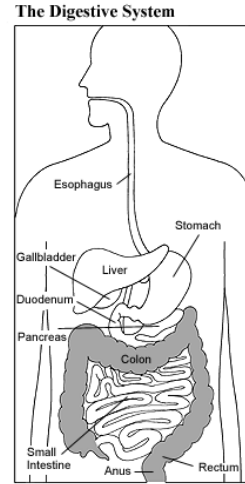
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COLONOSCOPY

What is a colonoscopy?

A colonoscopy is a procedure where a flexible telescope (colonoscope) is passed around your large intestine (colon and rectum) via your anus. It allows Dr Clark to see the inside of your bowel on a video screen and to perform procedures such as biopsy, removal of polyps, marking of polyps (with India ink), and treatments for bleeding. The procedure takes 30 – 60 minutes.



How am I prepared?

In order to obtain clear views, it is important that the bowel is thoroughly cleaned out. Patients usually report that this is the most unpleasant part of the procedure. You will need to follow a special diet and drink a quantity of “bowel prep” solution.

What about my usual medications?

In general, these should all be taken as usual. Exceptions will include:

- Warfarin or other blood thinning drugs
- Aspirin or other anti-inflammatory drugs
- Insulin or other diabetic tablets
- Iron supplements
- Any herbal drugs (You will need to check with the manufacturers as to what these contain)

The need to stop these medications will be discussed with Dr Clark beforehand.

It is also necessary to inform the anaesthetist of all medications, past medical history, and allergies.

Will I be awake during the procedure?

An anaesthetist will usually be present and you will have the opportunity to discuss this further with them. Although it is not normally described as a general anaesthetic, you will be heavily sedated and often will not recall the procedure.

PATIENT INFORMATION

www.davidclark.net.au

What if something abnormal is found?

If possible, it will be dealt with at the time of the procedure. Polyps can often be removed, but if it is too large or if a cancer is found, biopsies can be collected.

What are polyps?

A polyp is an abnormal growth on the inner lining of the bowel. Although they are not usually cancerous, most will grow into cancer with time. Removing polyps is an important means of preventing bowel cancer.

How will I know what is found at the colonoscopy?

Dr Clark will speak with you and/or your family members immediately after the procedure. The following day our practice nurse will phone you to check you are OK. She can explain the findings again (often you are still groggy when you talk to Dr Clark). Additionally, the results of the biopsies/polyps are usually available then. Finally, a formal report is sent to your general practitioner. Copies can easily be sent to any other doctors involved in your care.

What are the risks?

Colonoscopy is a frequently performed and safe procedure. Complications are uncommon. Most studies report complications in less than 1 in 1000 examinations. Risk is increased when polyps are removed.

Important complications include:

- Perforation of the bowel – This is usually evident soon after the procedure and may require surgery.
- Bleeding can occur. – This may be from the site of the polyp or biopsy, or related to treatment for haemorrhoids. Very rarely, a blood transfusion may be required and surgery is only necessary in extreme cases.
- Complications related to sedation are also uncommon and your anaesthetist will monitor you during the procedure.

What can I expect after the procedure?

Because air is inflated into the bowel during the procedure, it is very common to feel bloated and have crampy “wind” pains. This may persist for up to 48 hours.

You will have a light meal as soon as the sedation has started to wear off.

Severe pain is not to be expected and you need to contact Dr Clark by phoning 3350 2088.

Effects of Sedation / Safety Issues

Even though you may feel OK after the procedure, small amounts of sedative will remain in your bloodstream. For this reason, **you must not drive a car or operate machinery for 12 hours after the procedure.** Failure to follow this advice carries the same implications as drink driving and is against the law.

You should also not sign any contracts or make important decisions for 24 hours.

You should not consume alcohol as the sedative effects will be increased.

You should be cautious with simple tasks around the house e.g. using knives, etc.

Responsible Person

You must be taken home and cared for overnight by a responsible person.

How accurate is colonoscopy?

No investigations in medicine are perfect. Studies have shown colonoscopy to be more accurate than barium enema but up to 3% of cancers can be missed. Small polyps can be missed in up to 6% of cases. CT colonography is still being evaluated and radiological procedures have the downside that a colonoscopy and a second bowel prep will still be required if any abnormality is found.

Further Questions

For most patients, the procedure is not nearly as unpleasant as they had imagined or been told by friends or relatives. Please contact my rooms if you have any questions. There will be a further opportunity to talk to Dr Clark prior to the procedure.