

Community Endoscopy Service

Procedural Risks

What is a Colonoscopy?

A colonoscopy is a procedure that allows us to examine the lining of the colon (large bowel). It is useful in diagnosing a range of symptoms and for monitoring pre-existing conditions.

A flexible tube called a colonoscope which is about the size of your index finger, is passed through your back passage and manoeuvred around the colon by a specially trained doctor or nurse, called an endoscopist. The lining of the bowel is examined thoroughly by the endoscopist throughout the procedure to help determine a cause for your symptoms.

The purpose and intended benefit/s of this procedure is/are:

- To aid diagnosis and formulate a treatment plan for routine diagnostic investigations, planned surveillance or follow up.

Possible side effects of the procedure:

- Mild abdominal discomfort, such as cramp, soreness in the back passage, loose motions for a few days or slight bleeding.

Possible complications of the procedure:

- Bleeding happens about once in every 16,000 procedures and once in every 1,000 procedures when removal of a polyp is necessary. Occasionally it is severe and requires a blood transfusion.
- Perforation – a hole in the bowel wall that may require an operation to repair it. This may happen once in every 1500 procedures.
- There is a risk that a cancer may not be identified, 5-6% possibility – this may be due to poor bowel prep, folds in the bowel wall or for technical reasons.

Alternative treatment:

- Should it be decided by your referrer/consultant that you are not suitable for a colonoscopy, an alternative procedure may be available to you via your GP services. In certain circumstances a CT (Computerised Tomography) scan may be a suitable alternative to a colonoscopy. Please be aware that these scans are diagnostic only and if it is decided that you need further treatment, a colonoscopy may still potentially be advised. This is a matter for you and your GP to discuss as CT scans are not performed at our endoscopy units.