

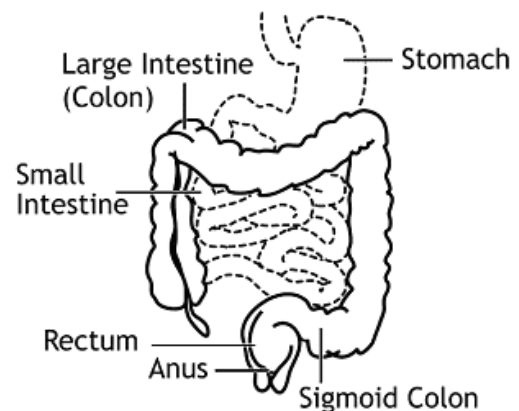
Colonoscopy

Colonoscopy is the examination of the large intestine using a flexible endoscope called a colonoscopy. This examination relies on good cleansing of the large bowel to clear faecal matter so that the best possible views are obtained. Poor bowel cleansing can compromise the examination as small lesions, such as small polyps or very early cancers, can be missed. Overall, about 85 – 90% of the bowel mucosal surface can be surveyed at colonoscopy. The procedure can produce discomfort as the camera passes around various bends in the bowel, due to the bowel stretching, and intravenous sedation is used to ensure your comfort. It is necessary to have a person to take you home safely and care for you until you have fully recovered from the effects of the sedation.

Colonoscopy Indications

Colonoscopy is used to:

- Investigate the large intestine and terminal ileum for diseases like inflammatory bowel disease or cancer
- Screen for polyps to help prevent bowel cancer
- Investigate positive 'faecal occult blood tests', bleeding, iron deficiency anaemia, or unexplained abdominal pain
- To obtain tissue for analysis for conditions including chronic diarrhoea, graft-versus-host disease, infections and other diseases
- Treat blockages in the colon if the patients cannot have surgery



Preparation

To cleanse the colon adequately takes several days and entails a specialised diet for three days prior to the test, as well as drinking a bowel cleansing solution on the day prior to the test to clear the colon of faeces.

There are several different preparations available but all require you to have easy access to toilet facilities and take about 4 to 12 hours to complete the cleansing process. If you suffer with constipation, you may require additional therapies prior to the bowel preparation. With successful cleansing you will pass only a yellowish, mostly clear, liquid motion. Please ensure that you drink plenty of water and fluids to prevent dehydration. A good guide to hydration for most people is the colour of the urine – it should remain pale yellow. Written instructions for the type of bowel preparation and the dietary changes specific to your procedure will be provided. Discuss any questions about this process well ahead of time.

Colonoscopy Procedure

You will be asked to arrive about half an hour before your test. You will be given a hospital gown to change into. When you enter the procedure room you will have to remove your underwear as well. The nursing staff will help you along the way with any questions or concerns. The anaesthetist will insert an intravenous cannula. The intravenous access is required to administer the sedation and possible some intravenous fluids if you have become dehydrated during the bowel preparation process. A clear plastic oxygen mask is usually placed before you are sedated and there will be monitoring equipment attached by the anaesthetist to keep you safe during the sedation. The test will usually take between 15 minutes and 45 minutes usually, depending on how complex the procedure is, and you will be drowsy for some time afterwards.

After your procedure once you have recovered, you can eat and drink and change back into your clothes. When you have recovered sufficiently, you can be taken home to rest for the remainder of the day. You should not drive for 24 hours because of the sedation medications used. Rarely, admission to the hospital for observation may be necessary.

Complications

Every procedure carries risks and colonoscopy has several risks due to the nature of the procedure. Passing a colonoscopy through the average bowel poses few problems but sometimes the colon can be difficult to negotiate. Reasons for the difficulty can include previous surgery in the abdomen or pelvis that makes the colon stuck in place, tight structures, or bends in the colon, the presence of severe colonic injury, severe inflammation of the passage of the colonoscope, or gas insufflation used during the procedure. The common risk is discomfort during the procedure, usually managed by sedation. The most severe complication is perforation or tearing of the bowel. If the colon is damaged, it may have to be repaired surgically and this may require an open operation (laparotomy) and possibly a stoma (external drainage bag) – a stoma is generally temporary. Overall, the risk of damage to the bowel is about 1 in 1000 or less.

Removing polyps can lead to bleeding and about one in a hundred patients that have bleeding may require further treatments, such as blood tests or even a transfusion. Severe diathermy for the removal of large polyps reduces the bleeding risk but may lead to thermal bowel damage – this depends on the size and type of polyp and increases the risk of a bowel injury to about 1 in 500 or larger polyps.

The risk of a major disability or damage to the nerves, heart, lungs, or death resulting from this procedure is exceedingly low. Small polyps are removed without the use of electrocautery or diathermy as this has been found to be safer, with less risk of delayed bleeding.

Some complications such as pain, bleeding, or post-polypectomy perforation can occur as late as two weeks after the procedure. If you develop any concerning symptoms you should contact the specialist or the hospital immediately. If you are unwell, it is recommended you attend the Mater Private Emergency 301 Vulture street, South Brisbane 07 3163 1000 or your nearest hospital's emergency department. All care and effort is taken to ensure you are safe and that any risk of complications is minimised. You will be told if any particular problems occurred or are likely to occur as a result of your test before you leave the hospital. If there is immediate concern about a possible complication you may be admitted to the hospital.

If you have any questions about this information, discuss these before you attend your procedure. You can telephone on the numbers below if needed.

Contact Details

Private Mater Private Hospital – Endoscopy Unit
Level 6 Mater Private Hospital
301 Vulture Street, South Brisbane QLD 4101
Phone: 07 3163 1044 Fax: 07 3163 1185

Rooms Mater Hill Gastroenterology
Suite 2 Level 2 Salmon Building
537 Stanley Street South Brisbane QLD 4101
Phone: 07 3163 7820 Fax: 07 3163 1371

Emergency Mater Private Emergency
301 Vulture Street, South Brisbane QLD 4101
Phone: 07 3163 1000 Fax: 07 3163 1032

For urgent enquiries during the weekend please call the Mater Switch on 07 3163 8111 and ask to speak with your specialist.