

## YOUR GUIDE TO A COLONOSCOPY

# So what actually happens *down there?*

The colonoscopy. Famously dreaded, often misunderstood. Here's your slightly cheeky (pun intended) guide to what it actually involves.

### WHAT IS A COLONOSCOPY?

**Yes, it goes up your bum. Let's get that out of the way.**

It's a careful look at the lining of your large bowel using a flexible tube about as thick as your finger, with a wide-angle camera on the tip. Your specialist guides it gently through, taking pictures the whole way. It has the highest sensitivity for spotting abnormalities, and it's the only test that can take biopsies and remove polyps in the same procedure.

### THE PREP (YES, IT'S THE WORST BIT)

The exact prep varies between doctors, but it generally means three days of low-fibre eating, then a cleansing drink the night before. It'll turn your toilet into your best friend for the day. We suggest you work from home! It's not glamorous. But a clean bowel means a safe, accurate procedure.

Cancel your breakfast, lunch & dinner plans. You've got this!

### WHAT ABOUT MY MEDS?

Most can keep going as normal. Tell your specialist if you're on insulin, aspirin, blood thinners (warfarin, clopidogrel, dabigatran), blood pressure or heart treatments, or iron tablets.

Iron stops a week before. Mention any allergies too. When in doubt, ask.

### ON THE DAY

You'll be checked in, asked about your health and meds, and given a hospital gown (the breezy back-opening kind, work it!). You'll get IV sedation – enough to keep you relaxed and comfortable! A clip on your finger monitors your oxygen and heart rate. You lie on your side, the specialist works gently.

Procedure takes around 30–45 minutes. Plan two hours start to finish.

### WHAT IF THEY FIND SOMETHING?

If anything needs a closer look, your specialist takes a tiny biopsy (painless) to send to the lab. Colonoscopies can also pick up other conditions like inflammatory bowel disease (Crohn's, ulcerative colitis), microscopic colitis, and diverticular disease. If they find polyps (growths that could become cancerous over time), they usually remove them right then and there. Yep, you can walk in with polyps and walk out without them.

### AFTER THE PROCEDURE

You'll have a quick recovery snooze, your specialist will run through what they saw, and you'll head home. Biopsy results usually take between 1 to 2 weeks.

- Have someone drive you home
- No work, driving, or big decisions for 24 hours
- No alcohol for 24 hours
- Some bloating is normal (passing wind helps)
- You can usually eat normally afterwards

## Suck it up. Save your life.

Colonoscopies are safe, common, and genuinely the **gold standard** for spotting bowel cancer early. If your GP has suggested one, don't put it off.

**Bowel cancer found early is highly treatable.**

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