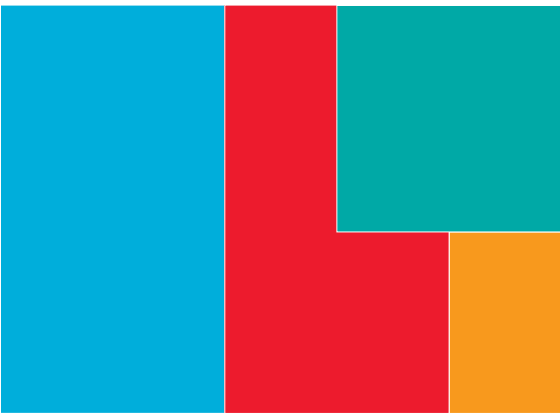


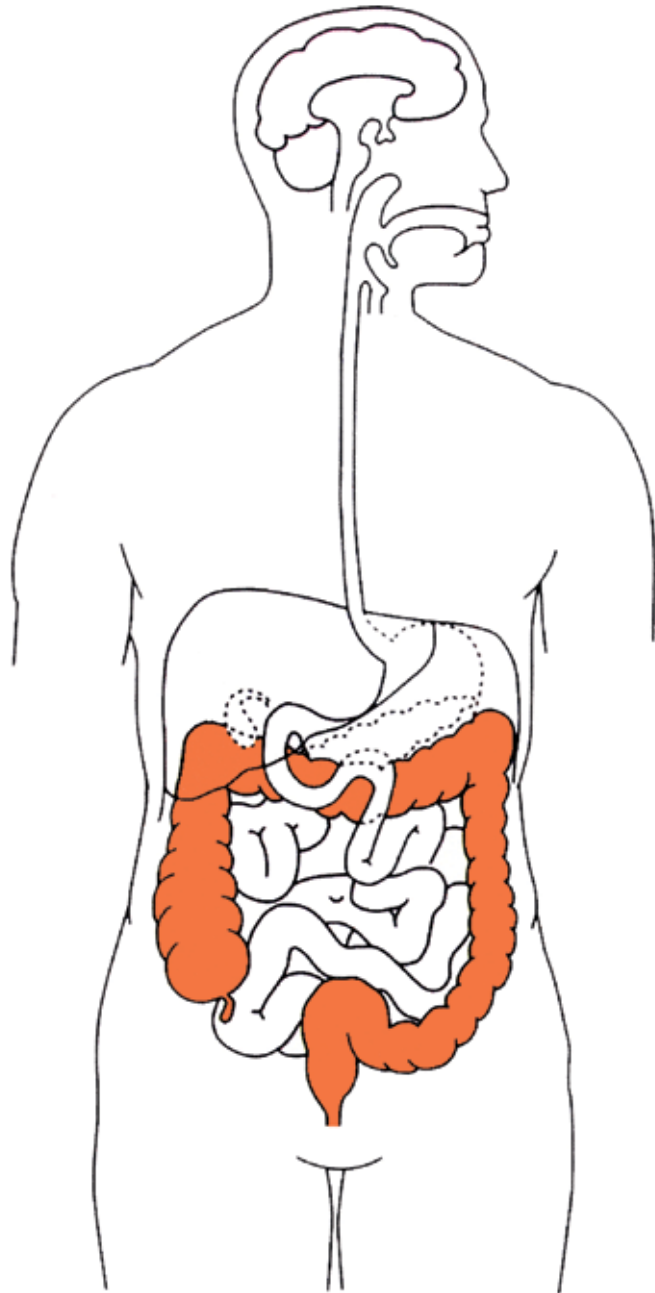
Virtual Colonoscopy

Patient Information



Northwick Park & St. Mark's Hospital
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This information tells you about virtual colonoscopy, a test to look inside your abdomen and bowel for any abnormality. It explains how the test is done, the risks involved and what to expect.

What is virtual colonoscopy?

Also known as CT colonography, virtual colonoscopy involves using a CT scanner to produce two- and three-dimensional images of the whole of the large bowel (colon and rectum).

'CT' stands for Computed Tomography, which is a way of using X-rays to produce images of a 'slice' through a part of the body.

During a virtual colonoscopy, gas will be used to inflate the bowel via a thin flexible tube placed in your back passage. CT scans are then performed with you first lying on your back and then on your front. In this way, doctors can then look at the images for polyps and signs of cancer.

If anything unusual is seen on the scan, you may be offered an endoscopy for a sample to be taken (biopsy).

Are there alternatives to a virtual colonoscopy?

There are two alternative ways of looking at the large bowel; barium enema and endoscopy.

Barium enema has been available for many years but does not provide as much information and is less comfortable for patients.

Endoscopy, where a thin tube with a camera on the end (colonoscope) is passed into the back passage and moved up and around the bowel, remains as a standard test for the large bowel. It is more invasive than virtual colonoscopy and usually requires sedation. However, it does allow tissue biopsy or polyp removal if needed.



What do I have to do before my virtual colonoscopy?

Bowel preparation

To give us a clear view of the bowel lining, your bowel has to be prepared before the test. This will either involve clearing the bowel of stool (faeces) using strong laxatives or drinking an iodine or barium-based 'tagging' liquid with meals about 2 days before having the test.

You will be given a leaflet explaining this preparation in more detail. It also provides dietary instructions regarding what you should or should not eat before your test.

Taking tablets and medicines

If you take Metformin (Glucophage) tablets for diabetes, please let us know on the day of your test. We sometimes ask patients to stop these tablets for two days after the test.

You should continue to take all your other tablets.

Please let us know if you have any of the following when you arrive for your test:

- Diabetes
- Asthma
- Kidney problems
- Glaucoma
- Prostatism
- Angina
- You have had a heart attack in the last six months
- You are waiting for heart surgery
- You are waiting for a coronary angioplasty
- You have any allergies
- You have had a reaction to iodine or intravenous contrast

If you have any questions, please ring:
Tel: 020 8235 4180
(Mon – Fri, 9am to 5pm)

Please also let us know if the following applies to you because you may need to have antibiotics before your test:

- You have been told that you need to have antibiotics when you go to the dentists
- You have an artificial heart valve
- You had rheumatic fever in the past

If so, please let us know as soon as possible.
Tel: 020 8235 4180
(Mon – Fri, 9am to 5pm)

Where do I go when I arrive at the hospital?

You should go to the Radiology (X-ray) Department on **Level 4** at **Northwick Park Hospital** and report to the **CT/Ultrasound Reception**. You will be greeted by one of the Radiology Assistants and guided to the preparation area to get changed into a gown.

If you need help with changing or translating, please bring someone with you if you are able to do so.

What happens during virtual colonoscopy?

- The Radiographer will explain the test and answer any questions, before asking you to sign a consent form. Please let him/her know if you have had any problems with your bowel preparation
- The procedure will then usually take about 15-20 minutes
- You may have a cannula inserted into one of the veins in your arm
- You will be asked to lie down on the scanner table on your left side
- The Radiographer will pass a short, thin flexible tube into your back passage
- A muscle relaxant may be injected to avoid bowel spasm
- You may be given an iodine-based intravenous contrast via the cannula



- Gas (carbon dioxide) will be gently introduced into your bowel through the tube in your back passage
- This is done at a controlled rate by a machine specifically designed for this purpose
- Despite the muscle relaxant, you may still feel some bloating and mild discomfort in your abdomen like 'bad wind'
- Once the Radiographer is satisfied with the amount of gas in your large bowel, a CT scan will be taken with you lying on your back
- You will then be asked to turn on to your front for a second scan
- Each scan will take about 10 to 20 seconds (1 breath hold)

Are there any risks?

Virtual colonoscopy is generally regarded as a very safe test.

Problems can occur rarely, and if they do, they are similar to those which could happen with other methods of examining the large bowel.

These include the following:

- Abdominal discomfort
- 'Faint-like' reactions
- Reaction to the injected contrast
- Damage to the bowel wall (a small tear in the lining of the colon or rectum may occur rarely, in fewer than 1 in 3000 tests)

What happens after the test?

Although some patients will be able to go home immediately after the test, we may be able to offer some patients a 'same-day' endoscopy if an abnormality is found.

If so, we would recommend that you stay in the hospital (or be available on a phone), fasting, for up to two hours after your test while we fully review your scan.

Same-day endoscopy

If same-day endoscopy is offered, you will be informed about what this examination will involve and escorted to the **Wolfson Endoscopy Unit on Level 3 of St Mark's Hospital** as necessary.

The endoscopy will take place later that morning or in the early afternoon.

A sedative injection is often given during endoscopy. If you have been given sedation, a responsible adult must be available to take you home. For the rest of the day, you should NOT:

- Drive a vehicle
- Operate machinery
- Drink alcohol
- Sign legal documents
- Supervise children on your own

If this may be a problem for you, please let us know. We can always arrange your endoscopy for a different day.

Indeed, same-day endoscopy is not always appropriate or may not be possible for other reasons. In this case, you will be given an appointment for a later date.

Research

St Mark's Hospital is a world renowned institution, specialising in bowel disorders. There is an active research program running side by side with our routine clinical work. Your anonymised clinical information/data may help us to improve and develop computer software. Also, you may be invited to enrol in a research study. This will be voluntary and we will require your informed consent, before participating.

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Any further questions?

We will do our best to make your visit as comfortable and stress free as possible. If you have any further questions, or suggestions for us, please let us know on this number:

020 8235 4180

(Mon – Fri, 9am to 5pm)

If you would prefer information and advice in your own language, please telephone:

020 8235 4130

(Mon – Fri, 9am to 5pm)

If you have internet access, you can find out more about virtual colonoscopy on the National Institute of Clinical Excellence website:

www.nice.org.uk/page.aspx?o=104843

For more information on bowel cancer:

www.bowelcancer.org

If you want to know more about endoscopy/colonoscopy:

www.stmarksendoscopy.org.uk

