

Preparation For Your CT Colonography Examination

Radiology Department
Patient Information Leaflet



What is a CT Colonography?

Computerised Tomography (CT) Colonography is a test used to look inside your bowel and abdomen. The test uses a CT scanner to produce images of a “slice through a part of the body”.

A CT Colonography involves using a CT scanner to produce two and three dimensional images of the whole of the large bowel (colon and rectum).

You may have been referred for this test to help your doctor find out what is causing symptoms such as abdominal (tummy) pain, weight loss, a change in your usual bowel habit and blood in your faeces (stools).

Before the test you will be asked to follow a special diet, take a laxative preparation and you will be given some Omnipaque (xray dye) to drink at home. The special diet and laxatives will help to empty your bowel before the test and the Omnipaque is used to coat any faeces that remain in the bowel.

Are there any alternatives?

There are two other ways of looking at the large bowel:

- Barium Enema.
- Colonoscopy.

Barium enema has been available for many years but does not provide as much information and is often more uncomfortable for patients.

Colonoscopy involves a flexible tube with a camera on the end to directly visualize the large bowel and continues to be the main test for looking at the bowel. It is more invasive than CT Colonography and usually requires sedation. However, a biopsy or sample of tissue can be taken at the same time if required.

These two tests will only give us information about your large bowel. CT Colonography also provides information about the other structures in your abdomen.

Are there any risks?

CT Colonography is regarded as a very safe test.

Problems that may occur are similar to any other test for imaging the bowel.

There is a small risk that inflating the colon (carbon dioxide gas is introduced into the tummy cavity to expand it so that colon is clearly seen) may cause a tear (perforation). The risk of perforation is about 1 in 3000 and is lower than that of a colonoscopy.

Other possible side effects / adverse effects:

- Abdominal pain/bloating.
- Feeling faint.
- Reactions to the injected contrast agent ("x-ray dye").

Dehydration or an electrolyte imbalance caused by the laxatives. It is important to drink plenty of fluids.

Can I take my medication as usual?

If you take Metformin (Glucophage) tablets for any condition, please telephone us to inform us at least 48 hours before the CT appointment as you may be required to stop this medication prior to the test. You should continue with all other medication as normal.

Radiation Safety

There is a link between developing cancer and excessive exposure to radiation. We keep the radiation dose to an absolute minimum and the dose you are exposed to during a CT Colonography is approximately the equivalent to three years natural background radiation (i.e. the amount of natural radiation you would receive from living in the UK for 3 years) However, your doctor feels that benefit of an accurate diagnosis far outweigh any potential health risks.

Female patients only:

If there is any chance of being pregnant please contact the CT scan department for advice before starting the preparation.

If you take oral contraceptives, diarrhoea may reduce their effectiveness.

Do I need sedation for this test?

Sedation or pain relief is not needed for this test. Most people find that it can be a little uncomfortable, but as soon as the test is finished the discomfort will ease.

Do I need to do anything before the test?

The most important thing to do is follow the bowel preparation Instructions.

What happens during the procedure?

The radiographer will explain the test and answer any questions, before asking for your consent. Please let them know if you had any problems with your bowel preparation. The procedure usually takes about 30 minutes.

You may have a small tube, called a cannula, inserted into one of the veins in your arm.

- You will be asked to lie down on the scanner onto your left side.
- The radiographer or radiologist will pass a small flexible tube into your rectum (back passage).
- A muscle relaxant is often injected to avoid bowel spasm. (You must wait 1 hour before driving after this injection).
- You may be given an injection of an iodine based intravenous contrast medium 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 discomfort in your abdomen.
- Once the radiographer is satisfied with the amount of gas in your bowel, CT scans will be taken with you lying in 2 positions; first on your back and then on your front or your side.
- Each scan will take about 10-20 seconds (one breath hold). Sometimes the radiographer may need to take extra scans to ensure we can fully see your entire bowel. Occasionally we will perform a scan of your chest at the same time for additional information.

Preparation For Your CT Colonography Examination

What is Picolax?

Picolax is a strong laxative which is used to cleanse the bowel prior to the examination.

What is Omnipaque?

Omnipaque is a contrast media or x-ray dye and contains iodine. It will improve the quality of your CT Scan and lead to a more accurate diagnosis.

Are there any side effects to taking Picolax and Omnipaque?

All drugs may have some side effects. **Picolax and Omnipaques do have a laxative effect and will cause diarrhoea so it is advisable to stay close to a toilet.**

You may experience some abdominal cramps and bloating. You may get a sore bottom due to the frequent diarrhoea and you can use a barrier cream such as Vaseline or nappy rash creams to alleviate this.

Some people will experience headaches and nausea/vomiting. Most of these side effects are related to dehydration so it is very important to drink plenty fluids.

Two Days Before Your Appointment

IMPORTANT Preparation for the examination starts two days before your appointment with a Low Residue Diet.

Please read all sections of the leaflet completely and follow the instructions in order to prepare your large bowel for the test. If you do not follow these special instructions fully, we may not be able to perform the test.

Two Days Before the Appointment

You should follow a low residue diet consisting of the following:

- Fats (use sparingly) - Butter or Margarine.
- Rice - plain or boiled white rice.
- Eggs - boiled or poached.
- Meat/Fish - Mince or well-cooked tender lean beef, lamb, ham or veal, pork, poultry, fish, shellfish.
- Cheese - Cream, cottage cheese or cheese sauce.
- Bread - White bread or toast.
- Cereals - Crisped rice cereal, cornflakes, (no bran).
- Pasta - Plain macaroni, spaghetti, noodles.
- Potatoes - Boiled, creamed, mashed or baked (no skin).
- Dessert - clear jelly (not red-coloured jelly).

Foods to avoid: Red meat, sausage, pies, any fruit or salads, most vegetables, potato skins, chips, wholemeal or brown bread, nuts, pulses, baked beans, wholemeal pasta, brown rice, puddings containing fruit and nuts, cakes, biscuits and yoghurts.

The Day Before The Examination

From Midnight - Do Not Eat Any Solids Until After the Procedure.
You should only have a liquid diet.

You CAN have clear soups, jelly, custard (made with water), complan drinks, soft drinks (not fizzy), black tea or coffee, fruit or herbal teas, oxo, bovril or marmite drinks. Sugar or sweetners can be added.

At 8am - Take the first sachet of Picolax: Mix one sachet in 3-4 dessertspoons of cold water. Stir for 2-3 minutes - the mixture will become hot. Wait 5 minutes and then dilute the solution with cold water to make half a tumbler (150mls), stir and drink the mixture.

If you take any oral medication (tablets or liquids) you should avoid taking it the hour before and for an hour after taking the Picolax.

**It is important that you don't become dehydrated - try to drink at least a cup of water/fluids every hour all day and evening.
Aim to drink between 2 and 3 litres (3-5 pints).**

At 3pm - take the second sachet of Picolax (prepare as before). Continue to drink clear liquids.

At 7pm - Open the Omnipaque bottle by twisting the cap. Drink the 50mls bottle of Omnipaque solution. You do not need to dilute this but can mix this with cordial if required.

On the Day of the Examination/ Appointment

You should not eat any solids or drink milk until after the procedure. You may continue to drink clear fluids until 60 minutes before the procedure.

You can continue to take your usual medications as normal unless you have been specifically advised to stop them.

Where do I go?

Please check your appointment letter for the location and time of your appointment.

There are 3 CT Scanners in the hospital. One of the scanners is located in the Lancashire Cardiac Centre the other two scanners are located in XRay Central in Area 4 of the Hospital.

Can I bring a friend or relative?

Yes you can bring a friend or relative, however they will not be able to stay with you in the scan room during the procedure due to radiation safety regulations.

If you require an interpreter, please contact the department before you begin your preparation so that this can be arranged. (Please Note: Hospital policy states that relatives cannot act as interpreters) You will be greeted by a radiology assistant or radiographer who will direct you to the changing rooms where you will be required to change into a gown. You may wish to bring your own dressing gown to wear over your gown as dressing gowns are not supplied by the department. You will be in the Radiology Department for approximately one to one and a half hours.

After the Procedure

You will need to wait in the Department for approximately 20-30 minutes after your examination.

You can return to your normal eating and drinking pattern.

We recommend that you drink plenty of fluids for the following 2-3 days.

Although the carbon dioxide used to inflate your bowel is absorbed quite quickly following the procedure some minor abdominal discomfort may remain for 1-2 hours. Returning to your normal diet and moving around will help to ease any remaining discomfort.

However please seek urgent medical advice (your GP or Accident and Emergency out of hours) if you experience any of the following symptoms over the next 4 days:

1. Severe abdominal pain.
2. Increasingly painful abdominal discomfort.
3. Sweating and nausea.
4. Feeling generally unwell.

You may have been given an injection (Buscopan), used to relax the muscles in the bowel wall during your examination. Blurring of your vision can be a side effect of this injection, although, this side effect is short lived, usually 30 minutes. If you do experience blurring please make sure your vision has returned to normal before driving. Very rarely some people can develop blurred vision within 48 hours of this test as this injection may aggravate an underlying condition called glaucoma, if so you are advised to seek medical help.

Specific Instructions for Diabetic Patients

Please refer to the separate information leaflet entitled "Guidance for Diabetics undertaking a CT Colonography". It is important that you follow the instructions given in this booklet and if you have any questions do not hesitate to contact your diabetic nurse or General Practitioner before the procedure. Follow the instructions carefully enclosed in the leaflet before you attend your appointment.

Please alert our radiology booking team that you are diabetic as we need to ensure you have had a blood test within 3 months of your appointment.

Important information we need to know before your appointment

If you answer "YES" to any of the following questions, please contact the CT Scan department on Tel. 01253 955627:

- Are you allergic to x-ray contrast agents or iodine?
- Are you taking Blood-thinning/ anti-coagulant tablets e.g. Aspirin or warfarin or chlodogrel?
- Are you a diabetic on insulin or tablets?
- Do you have any kidney disease?
- Are you or might you be pregnant?
- Are you allergic to any of the ingredients listed on the Picolax packet?

Other sources of information:



CT Bookings:

Telephone: 01253 955627
(Monday-Friday 9am-5pm)



Hospital switchboard

Telephone: 01253 300000

Patient Relations Department

The Patient Relations Department offer impartial advice and deal with any concerns or complaints the Trust receives.



You can contact them via tel: 01253 955589
or by email: bfwh.patientrelations@nhs.net



You can also write to us at: Patient Relations Department, Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Blackpool Victoria Hospital, Whinney Heys Road, Blackpool FY3 8NR



Further information is available on our website: www.bfwh.nhs.uk

If you'd like a large print, audio, Braille or a translated version of this booklet then please call: 01253 955520



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