

Patient information factsheet

Having a colonic transit study

This factsheet will give you information about having a colonic transit study. We hope it will answer some of the questions you may have but, if there is anything you do not understand, a member of your healthcare team will be happy to explain further.

What is a colonic transit study?

A colonic transit study assesses how quickly material moves through your large bowel (or colon). Before coming to the hospital, you will be asked to swallow several capsules. You will then be asked to attend the hospital for a single abdominal x-ray. The capsules contain small markers which show up on x-ray. This will enable the reporting doctor (radiologist) to assess the function of your bowel.

Preparation for the test

You will need to stop all your usual laxatives from the day that you take the first capsule. Otherwise you can continue your normal diet.

You will be given six capsules for the test and you should take two capsules each day at breakfast time. The capsules are labelled Day 1 (red), Day 2 (blue and white) and Day 3 (yellow).

If you have any allergies and are concerned about taking the capsules, please let us know. Our telephone number is over the page.

On the day of the examination

You will be given an appointment to attend the hospital five days after taking the first two capsules.

At the hospital, you will have an x-ray of your abdomen performed. Any markers which are still within your bowel will be detectable on the x-ray.

If you are female and of childbearing capacity you will be asked to complete a form with the date of your last period and whether there is any possibility you may be pregnant. This is because this examination should only be performed when we can be sure that you are not pregnant.

Please let us know as soon as possible if you have problems standing or transferring from a wheelchair so that we can make arrangements.

After the examination

You can re-commence any laxative medication that you have stopped for the examination.

Risks

There is some exposure to radiation during the procedure because x-rays are used. However, as this is a low dose examination, exposure to radiation is kept to a minimum. Generally, the amount of radiation you are exposed to during this procedure is equivalent to between a few days and a few years of exposure to natural radiation from the environment.

Results

The radiologist will examine the pictures and a report of the findings will be sent to the doctor who requested the procedure. This report should be available at your outpatient follow up appointment.

Further information

Some of your questions should have been answered in this factsheet but remember that this is only a starting point for discussion about your treatment with the doctors looking after you.

It is important that you are satisfied that you have received enough information about the procedure. If you have any questions before or after the examination please telephone the radiology department on 023 8120 4870 from 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday.

Useful links

NHS Choices www.nhs.uk

If you need a translation of this document, an interpreter or a version in large print, Braille or on audio tape, please telephone 023 8120 4688 for help.