

Your child's colonoscopy

Information for children, families and carers

We have given you this factsheet because your child has an upcoming appointment for a colonoscopy. It explains what a colonoscopy is and what the procedure involves so you know what to expect and can help to prepare your child. We hope it helps to answer some of the questions you may have. If you have any further questions or concerns, please contact us using the details at the end of this factsheet.

This factsheet should be read alongside the 'Bowel preparation for your child's colonoscopy' factsheet we have given you.

What is a colonoscopy?

A colonoscopy is a test to check inside the large bowel (colon). It involves having a long, thin, flexible tube with a small camera inside it (called a colonoscope) inserted into your rectum (bottom).

Why has my child been referred for a colonoscopy?

Your child's doctor may have referred your child for a colonoscopy to help them:

- work out the cause of your child's symptoms
- provide a diagnosis
- decide on the best treatment option

If you are unsure why your child has been referred for a colonoscopy, please speak to your child's doctor. Alternatively, you can contact our paediatric gastroenterology nurse specialist team using the details at the end of this factsheet.

How should I prepare my child for the procedure?

Bowel preparation

Your child will need to take a laxative (a type of medicine that helps clear your bowels) the day before their procedure. This helps to give the doctor a clear view of the inside of their bowel during the procedure. We will send this medicine to you by post or give it to you in person at your child's clinic appointment.

Please read the separate 'Bowel preparation for your child's colonoscopy' factsheet we have given you for more information about how to prepare your child for their procedure. It is important that you follow the instructions carefully. If your child's bowel is not properly prepared, we may have to cancel their procedure.

General anaesthetic

Your child will need to have a general anaesthetic (medicine that sends you to sleep) for this procedure. Having a general anaesthetic will mean that that your child will remain still for the procedure and will not feel any pain.

Who will perform the procedure?

The procedure will be performed by a trained endoscopist (this may be a doctor or a nurse specialist).

Where will the procedure be performed?

We will perform the procedure in an operating theatre. Please see your child's appointment letter for more details.

What will happen before the procedure?

When you arrive for your child's colonoscopy, we will explain what will happen during the procedure and answer any questions you or your child may have. If you are happy to go ahead with the procedure, we will then ask you to sign a consent form.

An anaesthetist (a specialist doctor who is trained in giving general anaesthetic and sedation) will also meet with you and your child. At this appointment, the anaesthetist will explain what having a general anaesthetic involves, including the potential risks and side effects.

It is important that you let the anaesthetist know if your child has any known allergies or has had a reaction to any drugs or tests in the past.

We will then ask your child to change into a hospital gown.

The anaesthetist will then give your child the general anaesthetic. This will be given either as a:

- liquid that's injected into their veins through a cannula (a thin, plastic tube that feeds into a vein, usually on the back of the hand) or
- gas that they breathe in through a mask

You will be able to stay with your child until they are asleep. We will then show you where you can wait while your child has their procedure.

What will happen during the procedure?

Once the general anaesthetic has taken effect, we will insert a colonoscope into your child's rectum (bottom) and then pass it through to their large bowel.

We will take small samples of tissue (biopsies) from your child's bowel during the procedure. The samples we take will be the size of breadcrumbs. We will then send these samples to our laboratory for analysis.

The anaesthetist will carefully monitor your child's condition throughout their procedure.

How long will it take?

The procedure will take approximately one hour. However, you should expect to be in hospital for four to five hours in total.

Your child will usually be able to go home on the same day as their procedure unless we advise you otherwise.

Are there any risks or complications?

A colonoscopy is a safe and effective procedure, but as with any medical procedure there are some possible risks and complications.

Complications can include:

- **Bleeding** - This may be from the site where we have taken a biopsy or from minor damage caused by the colonoscope. If this occurs, the bleeding will usually stop by itself. Occasionally, observation and further treatment in hospital may be necessary.
- **Difficulty passing the scope around the bowel** - If this occurs, we may have to repeat the test on another day or perform an alternative test. We will discuss this with you.
- **Perforation (a tear or a small hole) in the colon** - This is a very rare and serious complication. If this occurs, observation in hospital is necessary. Occasionally, surgery may be needed. We will discuss this with you, if appropriate.

If your child experiences any complications during or after their procedure, they may need to stay in hospital longer than expected so that we can provide any necessary treatment.

What will happen after the procedure?

We will take your child to the recovery room where we will monitor them until they come round from the general anaesthetic. Once your child is awake, a member of our team will collect you from where you are waiting and take you to see your child. We will then move your child to the John Atwell day ward to continue their recovery (unless they are already an inpatient on another ward).

After the procedure, it is normal for your child to experience the following side effects:

- windy, cramp-like pain
- a small amount of blood from their bottom (if we took any samples)

These side effects should settle within 24 to 48 hours. If you have any concerns, please contact us on **023 8120 3814** for advice. Alternatively, you can contact your child's general practitioner (GP) for advice.

Before your child leaves the ward, we will explain what we have done today and what we have found. We will also give you:

- a copy of your consent form
- an advice sheet on what your child should and should not do after their procedure
- follow-up advice
- a prescription (if needed)

As your child has had a general anaesthetic, they will need to have a responsible adult to take them home and stay with them overnight.

For 24 hours after having a general anaesthetic, your child must not:

- drive
- operate machinery
- drink alcohol
- sign important documents

When should I seek urgent medical help?

Sometimes complications can occur up to two weeks after the procedure.

Go to your nearest emergency department or call **999** for an ambulance if your child experiences:

- severe bleeding from their rectum (bottom)
- extreme cramp-like pains in their abdomen (stomach)
- unexplained pains in their chest

Please take a copy of your child's discharge summary with you so that you can show it to the healthcare professional caring for your child.

When will I receive my child's results?

It may take a few weeks for the laboratory to analyse your child's tissue samples (biopsies). When the results are available, they will be sent to the doctor who referred your child for the colonoscopy. Your child's doctor will then contact you to discuss their results or to arrange a follow-up appointment.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us.

Paediatric gastroenterology nurse specialists

Telephone: **023 8120 3814** (Monday to Friday, 8am to 5.30pm)

Email: paedsgastronurses@uhs.nhs.uk

Alternatively, if we are unable to answer your call, please call our hospital switchboard on **023 8077 7222** and ask for bleep **1392** or **2776**.

Useful links

www.uhs.nhs.uk/Media/UHS-website-2019/Patientinformation/Childhealth/Bowel-preparation-for-your-childs-colonoscopy-2737-PIL.pdf

www.youtube.com/watch?v=XyGhrYmYSZY

If you are a patient at one of our hospitals and need this document translated, or in another format such as easy read, large print, Braille or audio, please telephone **0800 484 0135** or email patientsupporthub@uhs.nhs.uk

For help preparing for your visit, arranging an interpreter or accessing the hospital, please visit www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalsupport