

Patient information factsheet

Capsule endoscopy

We have given you this factsheet because you are due to have a procedure called a capsule endoscopy. It explains what a capsule endoscopy is and what the procedure involves so you know what to expect. We hope it will help 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.

What is a capsule endoscopy?

A capsule endoscopy is a type of endoscopy procedure which involves swallowing a small capsule (about the size of a large pill or a cod liver oil capsule) containing a tiny camera, battery and transmitter.

The camera takes digital images of the inside of your digestive system every two seconds for twelve hours. These images are transmitted wirelessly from a sensor belt worn around your waist and stored on a recorder carried in a bag over your shoulder.

What is it used for?

A capsule endoscopy is used to examine the small intestine (between the stomach and large bowel). It can be useful in the detection of conditions such as unexplained bleeding, iron deficiency anaemia, Crohn's disease, coeliac disease, leaking blood vessels (angiodysplasia), polyps or tumours in the small bowel.

How should I prepare for the procedure?

A nurse will telephone you before your procedure to carry out a pre-procedure assessment. The nurse will ask you about your medical history and any medications you are taking.

If you are taking iron tablets, you will need to stop taking them five days before your procedure.

It is important that you follow the instructions below carefully.

The day before the procedure

You may eat and drink normally until 2pm.

After 2pm, you should have clear fluids only (for example, clear soup, tea and coffee without milk, herbal teas, juices such as apple or cranberry, and water) until you go to bed.

On the day of the procedure

- It is important that you do not eat anything in the morning, but drink plenty of water.
- Do not take any medication in the morning, but bring it with you to your appointment in its original packaging.
- Wear loose fitting clothes (for example, a skirt or trousers with a blouse or shirt).

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What will happen before the procedure?

The doctor or nurse will explain the procedure to you, including the risks and benefits. This is a good opportunity to ask any questions you may have. If you are happy to go ahead with the procedure, we will ask you to sign a consent form.

What will happen during the procedure?

We will place a sensor belt around your abdomen (tummy). We will also give you a small bag to wear over your shoulder containing the recorder.

We will then remove the capsule from its container and you will see it flashing. We will then ask you to swallow the capsule with a glass of water.

A blue light will be visible on the recorder. This lets us know that it is receiving images from the capsule.

What happens after the procedure?

Once you have swallowed the capsule, you will be able to go home and resume your normal daily activities. The device will continue to take images from inside your body.

You are free to move about, but should avoid strenuous activities that may cause sweating or jerky movements.

The recorder is a small computer that should be treated with care. It is important that you don't:

- let anything hit against the recorder
- use laptops or other Wi-Fi equipment near the recorder

We will give you a mild laxative (medicine that helps to clear stools from your bowels) to drink at home. This will help to ensure we obtain good quality images.

You should not feel anything as the capsule passes through your intestines but we encourage you to drink plenty of water regularly during the test.

You will be able to remove the recorder and sensor belt after 12 hours. Place them in the bag we have provided you with and return this to the endoscopy unit by 10am the next day.

The capsule should pass from your body naturally the following day when you go to the toilet. It does not need to be retrieved and so you can flush the capsule.

It stops recording images as soon as it leaves your body.

You should avoid having an MRI scan or going through airport scanners for two weeks after the procedure.

What are the potential complications?

The capsule is usually passed from your body naturally, but in rare cases it can get stuck if there is a blockage in your intestine.

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When to seek medical help

Contact the endoscopy unit on **023 8120 6066** (every day, 8am to 6pm) if you develop:

- severe abdominal pain
- vomiting

Outside of these hours, go to your nearest emergency department. Remember to tell the healthcare professional assessing you that you have a capsule in your bowel.

What happens to the recorded images?

The images will be uploaded onto the recording system and read by the doctor in the next few days. They will then be stored confidentially as part of your medical records.

Your doctor will discuss your results and any necessary treatments with you at your next appointment.

Contact us

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

Endoscopy department

Telephone: **023 8120 6066** (every day, 8am to 6pm)

Useful links

www.nhs.uk/conditions/endoscopy

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