

Patient information factsheet

Patency capsule test

We have given you this factsheet because you are due to have a patency capsule test. It explains what a patency capsule test is and what the test 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 patency capsule test?

A patency capsule test is a method of checking the small bowel for possible strictures (narrowings) which could prevent the passage of a video capsule.

For this test, we will ask you to swallow a patency capsule (a small capsule that is about the size of a large pill or a cod liver oil capsule). This capsule is designed to pass down your small bowel. We will then arrange for you to have an x-ray (a quick and painless procedure used to produce images of the inside of the body) of your tummy (abdomen) the day after swallowing the patency capsule. This is to make sure the capsule has moved through your small bowel safely.

Please note that in addition to having an x-ray, you may also need to have a CT scan (a scan which takes detailed pictures of the inside of your body). If this is the case, we will discuss this with you.

Preparation

A nurse will telephone you before your patency capsule test to carry out a pre-procedure assessment. During this assessment, the nurse will ask you about your medical history and any medications you are taking. The nurse will then provisionally book you in for a formal video capsule appointment and a patency capsule test (this test will be a week before your formal video capsule appointment).

We will send you a patency capsule and laxatives (medicine that produces bowel movements and helps relieve constipation) by post with instructions about how and when to take them.

It is important that you follow the instructions below carefully.

On the day of the procedure

Morning

You can eat and drink normally and take all of your usual medications.

You will need to swallow the capsule at 7am (unless instructed otherwise). You should not feel anything as the capsule passes through your intestines but you should drink plenty of water regularly during the day.

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Evening

If you have not passed the capsule by 9pm (you will be able to see this in your poo), you will need to take two laxative tablets.

On the day after the procedure

You will need to come to the hospital the day after swallowing the patency capsule for an x-ray of your abdomen.

Time: 1pm

Location: Main x-ray department, C level, Southampton General Hospital (please check in at x-ray reception)

After the x-ray has been done, you will need to stay in the x-ray department until a specialist has looked at your x-ray images. This is because some people may also need to have a CT scan.

A capsule endoscopy nurse will ring you later in the afternoon to confirm if the formal video capsule procedure can take place.

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.

When should I seek medical help?

If you have severe abdominal pain or begin to vomit, contact the endoscopy unit immediately on: **023 8120 6066** (every day, 9am to 6pm).

Outside of these hours, call NHS **111** for advice or go to your nearest emergency department. Make sure you tell the healthcare professional assessing you that you have a capsule in your bowel.

What if the capsule doesn't pass on its own?

If you have a narrowing of your bowel, the capsule may not pass of its own accord, and may cause a temporary obstruction. However, the interior of the capsule is designed to absorb liquid from the bowel and will 'melt/dissolve' by itself. The outer cover will flatten which allows it to pass through the narrowing.

If the capsule does not pass of its own accord, you may need to stay in hospital for a short while to manage your symptoms until it dissolves.

Contact us

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

Endoscopy unit

Telephone: **023 8120 6066** (every day, 9am to 6pm)

Useful links

www.nhs.uk/conditions/endoscopy

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