



Incorporating THE MELBOURNE HAEMORRHOID & PR BLEEDING CLINIC
Providing a full range of colorectal specialist surgical services.
Promoting early detection and management of colorectal carcinoma.

COLONOSCOPY : PATIENT INFORMATION

What is colonoscopy ?

Colonoscopy is a procedure performed by your surgeon to assess your colon. A flexible tube, 6 feet in length is passed through the anus, and allows your surgeon to visualise the internal lining of your entire colon.

Why do we do colonoscopy ?

The internal lining of the colon is the site of many disease processes, including tumours. Colonoscopy thus allows your surgeon to diagnose or exclude these diseases. In general, cancer of the colon is preceded by a polyp, or a benign growth. Your surgeon can remove these polyps, and thus reduce your risk of later developing cancer.

What are polyps ?

Polyps are small, benign (non cancerous) growths of the lining of the colon. They vary in size between 2 mm and 5 cm. Some polyps will develop into a cancer if not removed. Colonoscopy is the only non surgical technique for removing colon polyps. They are removed at colonoscopy by the use of a "snare": a type of instrument which resembles a lasso. Usually, a small amount of electrical current is used to prevent the polyp from bleeding.

What does the procedure involve ?

You are brought into the hospital, generally into the Day Procedure Centre, for a period of around 3 hours. The procedure itself takes only 20 minutes. You are not given a general anaesthetic, but a drip is inserted into a vein in your arm or hand, by an anaesthetist.

He or she will administer to you a small dose of sedative, so that you will sleep through the procedure. You may still be aware of the procedure taking place, and may feel some discomfort, but this is generally minor. **Because you are sedated during your colonoscopy, you must make plans to be driven home by a relative or friend after your procedure.**

Are there alternatives to colonoscopy ?

Colonoscopy is the only non surgical test that allows visualisation of the lining of the colon. It thus also allows your surgeon to biopsy the lining of the colon (that is, to take a small sample of the colon to observe under a microscope.) This allows certain diagnosis of any disease of the colon in most cases.

What are the risks of colonoscopy ?

Rare complications during a colonoscopy can include bleeding, perforation, reaction to anaesthetic and infection.

If you wish to know more about these, your referring doctor or the doctor performing the test will be happy to explain.