



Colonoscopy patient information guide

This colonoscopy guide contains important information about your upcoming procedure, including bowel preparation instructions, fasting requirements, sedation, recovery, and what to expect before, during, and after your appointment at Moonee Valley Specialist Centre in Essendon.



Moonee Valley
SPECIALIST CENTRE
Gastroenterological and Related Care



What is a colonoscopy?

A colonoscopy is a procedure used to examine your entire large bowel, including the colon, large intestine, and rectum.

Your specialist may recommend a colonoscopy if you:

- Have symptoms such as rectal bleeding, abdominal pain, bowel habit changes, or unexplained low iron levels
- Received a positive bowel cancer screening test
- Have a history of bowel polyps or previous abnormal colonoscopy findings

A colonoscopy allows your specialist to assess the lining of the bowel and investigate possible inflammation, bleeding, polyps, or signs of bowel cancer.

Quick facts

Duration	Approximately 20–45 minutes
Anaesthesia	Sedation is usually required
Fasting	Clear fluids only before the procedure, and fasting for at least 6 hours before admission . Please follow the specific instructions given to you by your doctor. Your doctor may have given you different instructions.
Recovery	Recovery monitoring required after sedation
Results	Preliminary findings may be discussed on the day

Important things to remember

- Your bowel must be completely empty for the procedure to be successful.
- Follow all bowel preparation instructions exactly as provided.
- Please follow the specific fasting instructions provided by your doctor, as these may differ.
- Inform our team if you take blood thinners, diabetic medications, or anti-coagulants.
- Wear warm, loose, comfortable clothing to your appointment.
- Arrange for a responsible adult to drive you home after the procedure.
- Do not drive, travel alone, drink alcohol, work, or sign legal documents until the day after your colonoscopy.
- Rescheduling a procedure requires a nurse or doctor's appointment.
- Tell your doctor before booking if you think you may be pregnant.

Preparation steps

3 days before procedure

Switch to a low-fibre diet and avoid seeds, nuts, popcorn, whole grains, raw vegetables, and high-residue foods unless advised otherwise by your specialist.

Day before – Morning

Follow the soft-food diet, such as soups or smoothies, as instructed. Once bowel preparation begins, consume only clear fluids.

Approved clear fluids may include:

- Water
- Clear broth or strained soup
- Apple juice without pulp
- Black tea or coffee without milk
- Sugar-free jelly without red or purple colouring
- Clear sugar-free cordials without red or purple colouring

Day before – Evening

Take your bowel preparation solution exactly as instructed by your specialist or nursing team. The laxative preparation will cause frequent diarrhoea to help empty the bowel completely. We recommend remaining at home with easy access to toilet facilities during this time. Drink plenty of clear fluids before, during, and after taking the bowel preparation solution.

Day of procedure

Do not eat or drink for at least 6 hours before your admission time unless advised otherwise. Do not smoke, vape, or take oral medications within one hour before, during, or one hour after bowel preparation unless instructed by your healthcare provider. Bring your Medicare card, referral, medications, healthcare documents, and payment method to your appointment.

What to expect

A colonoscopy is performed using a thin, flexible tube called a colonoscope that contains a camera and a light source at the tip.

During the procedure, your specialist gently passes the colonoscope through the rectum to examine the full length of the large bowel and assess the bowel lining for abnormalities.

If polyps are found, they may often be removed during the procedure and sent for further testing.

During the colonoscopy

You will receive sedation to help keep you comfortable during the procedure. The colonoscope is carefully guided through the bowel while your specialist examines the lining of the colon and rectum. Air or carbon dioxide may be used to gently inflate the bowel for better visibility during the examination. Most procedures take approximately 20–45 minutes, followed by recovery monitoring.

After your appointment

Following the procedure, you will rest in recovery while the sedation wears off. Mild bloating, wind, or cramping may occur temporarily and usually settles quickly.

Preliminary findings may be discussed before discharge, though biopsy or pathology results may take several days to return.

Due to the effects of sedation, you must have someone drive you home and stay with you after the procedure. Avoid driving, alcohol, important decisions, work, or operating machinery until the following day.

Risks and safety of colonoscopy

Colonoscopy is generally safe when performed by experienced specialists in a controlled clinical setting. However, as with any medical procedure, there are some risks and potential complications to consider.

Possible risks may include bleeding, bowel perforation, infection, reactions to sedation, temporary bloating or discomfort, or complications related to polyp removal or biopsy.

Following all bowel preparation and fasting instructions carefully helps improve visibility during the procedure, supports accurate assessment, and reduces the likelihood of repeat procedures. Poor bowel preparation may delay, cancel, or require repeating the colonoscopy.

STOP blood thinners or diabetic medications only if specifically instructed by your specialist. Failure to follow bowel preparation and fasting instructions may result in cancellation or repeat procedures. Tell our team immediately if you experience severe nausea, vomiting, dehydration, or difficulty completing your bowel preparation.



Need to reschedule or have questions?

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Scan to manage
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