



CT Colonography

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What is CT Colonography?

CT Colonography is a CT scan of your abdomen which specifically looks at your large bowel, or colon. CT Colonography is sometimes called Virtual Colonoscopy. Images produced are interpreted by a Radiologist and from that a diagnosis can be made.

What are the advantages of a CT Colonography?

- Alternative procedure for failed or incomplete colonoscopy.
- Research has shown CT Colonography to be 97.7% sensitive to detect cancer, whereas, barium enema is only 63.7% (Thomas, Athchley & Higginson, 2009).
- Short examination time. Less than other colon examinations.
- Less chance of bowel perforation.
- Sedation and pain-relievers are not needed and therefore no recovery period is necessary.



What does the equipment look like?

The CT scanner is a donut-like machine with a hole in the centre. You will lie on a narrow examination table that slides in and out of this hole. The X-ray tube and X-ray detectors are located opposite each other in a ring, called a gantry. The gantry rotates around you but you cannot see it. A computer workstation that processes the imaging information is located in a separate control room where the MRT operates the scanner and monitors your test.

Pre examination

To give us the best view of your colon, faeces are cleared out using a laxative and a special diet that you will start two days before the test. The laxatives and diet sheet with instructions will be given to you prior to your procedure. You will have to take some oral contrast to tag what stool remains in your bowel. Please tell us in advance if you will need an interpreter.

Post examination

You may eat and drink as normal. You may experience mild abdominal discomfort for a few hours after the test.

After the test our radiologist will study the images and issue a report on the findings. This report will be sent to the doctor who requested the examination.

The examination

To enable us to see the wall of the colon fully, the colon is filled with air. We pass a thin plastic tube or catheter into your back passage and gently push in air. The vast majority of patients who have CT Colonography report a feeling of fullness when the colon is filled with air during the test, as if they need to pass wind. You may also feel some stomach cramps.

We may give you an injection of muscle relaxant (hyoscine). This will relax the bowel and ease any discomfort that you might feel.

Once the colon is filled with air, two CT scans are done, one with you lying on your back and one with you lying on your tummy.

You will remain lying on the table until the images are checked and cleared. The catheter is then removed and you will be shown to the bathroom. Afterwards we can provide you with a hot drink and a biscuit.

The examination will take approximately 45 minutes, with a further 30 minutes rest/observation period after the examination.



What are the risks?

There is a very small risk that inflating the colon with gas could injure or perforate the bowel. This has been estimated to happen in fewer than one in 10,000 patients.

Are there alternatives to CT Colonography?

There are two alternative ways of looking at your colon:

- **BARIUM ENEMA** has been available for many years but only gives information about the colon, not about other abdominal organs as seen with CT Colonography.
- **COLONOSCOPY** has also been available for many years and involves passing a thin flexible tube with a camera around the colon. This procedure usually requires sedation.

Both of these tests require you to clean the bowel.



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