

# DR CHRIS DESMOND

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## **COLONOSCOPY INFORMATION**

### **What is a colonoscopy?**

A colonoscopy is a procedure where a flexible telescope (colonoscope) is passed around your large intestine [colon and rectum] via your anus. It allows Dr Desmond to see the inside of your bowel on a video screen and to perform procedures such as biopsy, removal of polyps, marking of polyps, (with India ink) and treatments for bleeding. The procedure takes approximately 30 minutes.

### **How am I prepared?**

In order to obtain clear views, it is important that the bowel is thoroughly cleaned out. Patients usually report that this is the most unpleasant part of the procedure. You will need to follow a special diet and drink a quantity of "bowel prep" solution.

### **Will I be awake during the procedure?**

An anaesthetist is present and you will have the opportunity to discuss this further with them. Although it is not normally described as a general anaesthetic, you will be heavily sedated and often will not recall the procedure.

### **What if something abnormal is found?**

If possible, it will be dealt with at the time of the procedure. Polyps can often be removed, but if it is too large or if a cancer is found, biopsies can be collected.

### **What are polyps?**

A polyp is an abnormal growth on the inner lining of the bowel. Although they are not usually cancerous, most will grow into cancer with time. Removing polyps is an important means of preventing bowel cancer.

### **What are the risks?**

Colonoscopy is a frequently performed and safe procedure. Complications are uncommon. Most studies report complications in less than 1 in 1000 examinations. Risk is increased when polyps are removed.

### **Important complications include:**

Complications related to sedation are also uncommon and your anaesthetist will monitor you during the procedure.

\* Perforation of the bowel - this is usually evident soon after the procedure and may require surgery.

\* Bleeding can occur - this may be from the site of the polyp or biopsy, or related to treatment for haemorrhoids. Very rarely, a blood transfusion may be required and surgery is only necessary in extreme complications.

### **How accurate is colonoscopy?**

No investigations in medicine are perfect. Studies have shown colonoscopy to be more accurate than barium enema, but up to 3% of cancers can be missed. Small polyps can be missed in up to 6% of cases. CT colonography is still being evaluated and radiological procedures have the downside that a colonoscopy and a second bowel prep will still be required if any abnormality is found.