

# CT Colonography (CTC)

**Please read this information carefully it contains  
important information about your CTC appointment**

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This leaflet will tell you about your CT Colonogram and how to prepare for it.

## What is a CT Colonography (CTC)?

CT Colonography (sometimes referred to as CT Virtual Colonoscopy) is a CT scan that looks at the large bowel and is an alternative to having an optical colonoscopy.

For a CT Colonography to be successful, we will ask that you prepare your bowel with a special liquid called Gastrografin or Baritop and follow a special diet the day before your scan. The instructions for this can be found later in this leaflet under - Your Preparation.

## What happens during the CT Colonography?

To get good pictures of your large bowel, we will place a very small flexible tube into your back passage. We will then use some carbon dioxide to inflate the bowel. You will be asked to lie on your back and on your tummy or side while we take the scan.

## Is there anything else I need to know before my scan?

CT Colonography is generally a very safe test. Problems rarely occur. The CT department will make sure you are aware of these on the day of your scan and in the event of any problems they will make sure you receive the right care.

You can take all your medications as normal unless:

- You are diabetic - please contact the Diabetic Nurses on 01205 445816 or 01205 445695 for advice about your medication.
- If you are allergic to iodine **DO NOT TAKE** the Gastrografin, please contact Pilgrim Hospital CT appointments on 01205 445844 and you will be given an alternative bowel preparation.
- If you are on iron tablets you must stop taking them 3 days before your scan.

## Female Patients

If you suspect you may be pregnant OR if the appointment is more than 10 days after the start of your last period, you must contact the CT appointments team on 01205 445844 in advance to rearrange your appointment. If you are taking the oral contraceptive pill, diarrhoea can make it less effective. Continue taking the pill but use other precautions for the rest of that cycle.

## Risks and possible side effects from having the procedure

### Radiation risks

The amount of radiation used is more than an ordinary x-ray of the chest or body and is equal to the natural radiation we receive from the atmosphere over a period of approximately three years. The risk from this radiation dose is very low and outweighed by the advantage of colonic cancer detection or other colonic pathologies.

### Perforation of the bowel

Perforation of the bowel due to inflation with carbon dioxide can occur with this test but this is very rare (approximately 1 in 3000 tests). When it happens nearly all cases resolve without treatment, but it may require hospital admission and observation under the care of a surgeon in case an operation is needed.

Mild abdominal discomfort and bloating can occur when gas goes into the colon. We use carbon dioxide gas because the body quickly absorbs it. Any symptoms quickly pass off when the tubing is removed from the rectum and you have gone to the toilet.

### Buscopan (Muscle relaxant)

Occasionally patients receive an injection of a drug called Buscopan which is a muscle relaxant. The Buscopan relaxes the large bowel wall and allows the bowel to inflate when the carbon dioxide is inserted into the rectum.

Buscopan can make your mouth dry and your vision slightly blurred, which normally lasts for 15 to 20 minutes.

**Very rarely patients may develop pain or redness of the eyes which occurs in the 24 hours after the test. If this happens, you should go to an Accident & Emergency department immediately for a check-up.**

Please remember that this eye problem is very rare but we must inform all patients of the possible side effect even if it is very rare.

If you suffer from either a condition called **Myasthenia Gravis** or a condition called **Porphyria** please inform the radiographers when you enter the scan room for your examination.

If you have any **heart problems** such as angina, Cardiac arrhythmia or if you have had a recent heart attack then inform the radiographers when you attend for the test

as you may not be suitable for the injection of Buscopan. **If you use a GTN spray for angina, please bring this with you when you attend for your test.**

Despite these small risks, your doctor believes it is advisable that you should have this examination. Do bear in mind that there are greater risks from missing a serious condition like bowel cancer by not having it.

**Please remember this test is safe - serious complications are rare.**

## Your Preparation

To enable us to get the best images possible during your scan, it is vital that you follow these preparation guidelines.

## CT Colonogram Preparation

### Three days before your scan

- If you take iron tablets, stop taking them now
- Continue all your other medications as normal

### The day before your scan

- Take the Gastrografin as directed below before breakfast (no later than 10:00am)
- For breakfast you may have:
  - Tea/coffee (without milk)
  - Choose one of the following:
    - 2 slices of dry white bread
    - 1 boiled/poached egg and 1 slice of dry toast

Do not eat any solid foods for the rest of the day, you may have:

Clear soups (eg strained chicken soup)  
Jelly  
Bovril drinks  
Water, clear juice, fizzy drinks  
Coffee and tea (without milk)

You will need to drink at least 1 cup of water every hour during the day.

## The day of your scan

Do not eat solid food before your scan.

Please drink water, clear juice or fizzy drinks, ideally 1 cup every hour throughout the day until your examination.

## How to take your Gastrografin for appointments BEFORE midday 12:00

You will need to start taking your Gastrografin the day before your scan.

Before breakfast (no later than 10:00am), please drink 75mls of Gastrografin diluted with at least the same amount of water. It may be flavoured with cordial if you prefer.

At 6.00pm, drink remaining 25mls of the Gastrografin diluted as above.

## How to take your Gastrografin for appointments AFTER midday 12:00

You will need to start taking your Gastrografin the day before your scan.

Before breakfast (no later than 10:00am), please drink 50mls of Gastrografin diluted with at least the same amount of water. It may be flavoured with cordial if you prefer.

At 6.00pm, drink 25mls of the Gastrografin diluted as above.

Before 9:00am on the day of your scan drink the remaining 25mls of the Gastrografin diluted as above.

## Diet

It is important to perform your examination that you follow the diet as described. If you are unable to follow this diet, we may not be able to do the scan.

You must take the Gastrografin as directed. Please be aware Gastrografin can have a laxative effect and it is advisable to be near a toilet once you have started taking it.

## On the day of your scan:

Please do not eat any solid foods, you may drink water or clear sugary drinks (such as Lucozade).

## What will happen at the hospital on the day of my scan?

On the day of your test, please report to the x-ray department reception where you will be directed to the waiting area. Gowns are provided. You may, however, prefer to bring an extra dressing gown for your own comfort.

It is important that you bring your appointment letter with you on the day of your test.

The radiographer doing your scan will prepare you for the scan and make sure you are happy to go ahead.

If you are happy, you will have the scan which can take up to 30 minutes.

We may give you a muscle relaxant to avoid muscle spasm and make the test more comfortable. The radiographer will then place the small tube into your back passage and start to inflate your bowel with carbon dioxide. This is introduced very slowly using a machine designed for this exam which controls the pressure and flow rate. You may feel some bloating and mild discomfort whilst the carbon dioxide is going in.

The radiographer will then take the necessary pictures.

There are times when we might need to do more scans than expected. We may also need to give you an injection of some x-ray dye (contrast media) as part of the scan. If this is necessary, the radiographer will explain this to you at the time.

## After your test

You will be given an aftercare information sheet containing the instructions and information for you to read.

If you were taking iron tablets these can be restarted.

Please eat normally, but drink plenty of fluid for the next day or so as you may still be dehydrated.

Tea or coffee and a biscuit will be offered after your scan, but consider bringing a snack with you to eat afterwards as you may be hungry after fasting.

## How will I get my results?

You will not be given any results on the day of your test. If your GP sent you for the test, then results can be obtained from your GP around 7 to 10 days after your scan. If you have been sent by a hospital specialist, then you will be sent an appointment to attend the relevant clinic or contacted by letter with the results.

## What should I do if I develop new symptoms after my scan?

Most patient's bowels return to normal within 24 hours of the scan. Complications from CT Colonography are very unusual after you have left the radiology department. Abdominal pain, bloating and distension, vomiting or constipation in the initial days following your CT Colonography examination could be a sign that a perforation of the bowel has occurred.

If you do start to feel unwell in the days after the scan please attend your local A&E department explaining you have recently had a CT Colonography exam.

## References

Gastrografin Solution Product Characteristics: Bayer Pharma AG;  
Revised 12.2012

Guidance on the use of CT Colonography for Suspected Colorectal Cancer: BSGAR and RCR; 09.2014

Guidelines for the use of imaging in the NHS Bowel Cancer Screening Programme:  
*2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*: NHSBCSP Publication No5;  
11.2012

**Site: Pilgrim Hospital**

**Telephone:** 01205 445844

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