

Colonoscopy in Children

Patient Information



Colonoscopy in Children

What is colonoscopy?

Colonoscopy is an endoscopic procedure to help your child's doctor examine the lower part of his/her digestive system, including the large intestine (bowel) and the rectum.

Why is colonoscopy done?

The common reasons for conducting a colonoscopy in children include investigating symptoms like blood in stool, chronic diarrhoea and abdominal pain. It is also carried out to monitor an existing medical condition (including ulcerative colitis or Crohn's disease). It may also be done to remove tissue growths (polyps) or treat bleeding.

How can I prepare my child for a colonoscopy?

Before the procedure, your child will need to follow a strict eating and drinking routine. If your child takes medicines, consult his/her doctor to make a plan about which medications to take on the day of the procedure and when to take them.

To be able to see the bowels properly during the colonoscopy, your child's bowels need to be cleared of all stool. This is called "bowel prep". Bowel prep will require preparation a few days in advance.

- A week before the colonoscopy, your child will be asked to stop taking iron supplements (if any) as iron sticks to the bowel wall and may interfere with visibility.
- Two to three days before the procedure, your child should start a low residue/low fiber diet.

Foods you can choose from include:

- White bread
- White rice
- Plain cereal and crackers
- Skinless potatoes
- Chicken
- Fish
- Eggs
- Melons
- Ripe bananas
- Well-cooked vegetables

Foods that should be avoided during this time include:

- Whole wheat bread
- Brown rice
- Red meat
- Raw fruits with skin
- Nuts and seeds
- Popcorn

- One day before the colonoscopy, your child can have a light breakfast and a light lunch around noon, which may include clear fluids such as water, apple juice or any fluid which is see-through, toast made with white bread (without butter), up to two scrambled eggs, clear soup, chicken or fish. This will be their last solid meal until after the test. After this your child can keep taking clear fluids till 6 hours before the procedure. Later in the day, they will be given two doses of bowel prep medication a few hours apart as recommended by the healthcare provider.
- On the day of the procedure, your child will be given an enema (a procedure in which water is passed through anal area to expel stool) once they arrive at the hospital for their colonoscopy. At this point, your child must walk around and move as much as possible.

The eating instructions for your child's colonoscopy are also outlined in the table below:

Time before the procedure	Eating instructions
7 days	Your child will be asked to stop taking iron supplements (if any) as iron sticks to the bowel wall and may interfere with visibility.
2 to 3 days	Your child should start a low residue/low fiber diet.
1 day	Your child can have a light breakfast and light lunch around noon. This will be their last meal until after the procedure. Later in the day, they will be given two doses of bowel prep medication a few hours apart as recommended by the healthcare provider.
On the day	Your child should stop eating and drinking 6 hours before the procedure. On the day of the procedure, your child will be given an enema once they arrive at the hospital for their colonoscopy.

When your child has passed several watery stools that are clear or yellow, it indicates that your child's bowel is clear. If the bowel-prep medication has not cleared the stools, your child may need to receive an extra dose of the medication before the medical procedure or enema.

PLEASE NOTE: It is very important to inform the healthcare professional before the start of the procedure if your child has not passed clear, watery stools so that necessary actions can be taken.

What happens during a colonoscopy?

Before starting the procedure, the anaesthetist or your child's doctor will administer some medications so that the child goes to sleep. During colonoscopy, a thin flexible tube with a camera on the end will be inserted through the anus (external opening of rectum) and up into the rectum and large intestine. This does not cause pain as your child will be completely asleep during the procedure. The doctor will look inside the intestine and may also collect small samples of tissue (called biopsies) for testing. In general, colonoscopy takes about 30 to 45 minutes.

What should I expect after a colonoscopy?

After the procedure, your child will be observed for a few hours till the effects of sedation medication, wear off. Once the child is fully awake and has tolerated a liquid or soft diet orally, he/she will be discharged from the hospital.

At home, your child may have a little blood in the stool for a day or so. Do not be concerned about it as this normal, and is usually caused by the insertion of the instrument in the rectum. They may also experience discomfort from gas in the intestine, which will pass with time. Your child may also sleep more than usual. It is best to restrict their physical activities for six hours after the procedure.

At the time of discharge, the hospital staff will give you instructions as to when and where you should you bring your child next to discuss the results of colonoscopy.

Call your doctor or go to the emergency department immediately if your child experiences the following symptoms:

- Abdominal pain for more than an hour.
- An abdomen that is big and hard.
- Excessive bleeding.
- Bleeding that continues beyond the second day.
- Fever.
- Repeated vomiting.

In case of emergency, call:
The Aga Khan University Hospital's
24/7 Emergency and Acute Care Services Paediatric Area
(+92) 21 3486 1251
(+92) 21 3486 1252