

INFORMATION REGARDING COLONOSCOPIES (LOWER GI ENDOSCOPIES)

A colonoscopy, also called lower GI endoscopy, is an endoscopic technique that allows us to directly visualize the lower digestive tract, including the colon or large intestine and the terminal ileum or portion of small intestine that joins the colon using a flexible tube with a camera called endoscope.

As in other endoscopies, the great advantage of this technique is the ability to obtain small samples of tissue (biopsies) of the explored areas, and accurately diagnose a disease. The procedure is carried out with the patient lying comfortably on their left side or in a fully prone position. The flexible camera will be passed through the anus into the intestine.

In spite of adequate indications for the procedure and its correct execution, there can always be undesirable effects. These are usual minor and self-limited and can include such things as bloating and mild abdominal discomfort. There is however, the possibility of serious complications such as bleeding or perforation of the bowel. In exceptional cases, problems with low blood pressure, strokes, cardiac arrhythmias and even cardiac arrest can occur, especially in patients with pre-existing heart conditions. Additionally, respiratory depression and even respiratory arrest can occur if general anesthesia is required. These situations are serious and may require urgent medical or surgical treatment and carry a risk of death. Diabetes, chronic anemia, hypertension, obesity, underlying cardiopulmonary illnesses and advanced age can increase the possibility of these undesirable effects.

Before the test it is very important to notify your doctor of any pre-existing medical conditions, current medications, or as any known drug or food allergies. It is especially important to mention known heart or lung conditions, clotting abnormalities and the presence of implanted prosthesis or pacemakers. Please bring with you an up-to-date list of medications and specifically mention to the staff if you take blood thinners like Aspirin or Warfarin (SINTROM).

Before the procedure, any questions you may have will be answered in detail.