What happens when I arrive?

Please report to the main reception area in the Diagnostic imaging (X-ray) Department which is located on the ground floor of the Duchess Building. One of our receptionists will check your personal details such as name and date of birth on the computer. Please let them know if any of the information we hold is incorrect. You will then be asked to take a seat in the waiting area.

We will collect you from the waiting area and show you into a changing cubicle where you can undress and put on the gown provided and your own dressing gown if you have brought one with you. If you require any assistance please just ask.

We recommend that you remove glasses and any items of jewellery (except rings) to prevent them being damaged or affecting the images. You will be collected from the cubicle and shown into the examination room.

What does the procedure involve?

You may be given an injection of a muscle relaxant to help relax the muscles of your bowel wall. You may also be given an injection of contrast agent during the scan; this depends on the reason for the test. A thin tube is placed a few centimetres into your rectum. Carbon dioxide is gently passed into your colon to make the bowel wall easier to see. When this happens, you may briefly feel pains similar to trapped wind. You may also have the urge to go to the toilet, but because your colon is empty, this won’t happen. You may pass wind, but there is no need to feel embarrassed as the staff expect this may happen.

The table will move into the ring of the CT scanner so that the middle part of your body is lying in the centre of the scanner. The X-ray unit will rotate around you to help produce images from every direction. The scanner is operated by the radiographer from behind a window. He or she will be able to see, hear and speak to you throughout the procedure. You will have some scans taken while you lie on your back and others lying on your stomach. At certain points during the scan you may be asked to hold your breath for a few seconds. It can take several minutes for each image to form and it’s important to lie very still during the scan.

What happens after my procedure?

At the end of the procedure you will have the opportunity to use the toilet, sometimes you feel full as a result of the carbon dioxide gas. The gas will be absorbed quickly by your body so any discomfort felt will soon go. We will encourage you to have a hot drink before you leave but you will be able to go home when you feel ready. If you have had muscle relaxants or an injection of contrast agent, you will need to wait for an hour before driving. You may want to arrange for someone to drive you home after the scan.

What if I am taking medication?

You can continue to take your normal medication. Please contact us if you are already taking a laxative as you may need to stop this for a short while.

Appointments 01823 342307
Radiographers 01823 343038
What is a CT colonography?

CT colonography or virtual colonoscopy is used to examine your large bowel if you have symptoms such as changes in your bowel habit, weight loss or blood in your faeces, which can be symptoms of bowel cancer. The scanner produces three-dimensional images of your large bowel and rectum (back passage). CT colonography can show polyps and abnormalities on your bowel wall. Polyps are small growths on the inside of your bowel. They are usually harmless but they can sometimes develop into cancer.

Who will perform the scan?

The examination will be conducted by a radiographer (imaging technician) with specialist experience supported by a health care assistant. The images will be reported by a radiologist (a doctor who specialises in x-rays and scans). Please be aware that we have student radiographers working in our department who may be present during your examination and may contribute to your care.

Will I be shut in the scanner?

No, you will not be shut in. The CT scanner does not look like any other x-ray machine. It is a large square box with a big round hole through its middle, rather like a square doughnut. The scanner is open at both sides so people do not usually feel shut in. However, if you are worried that you may feel claustrophobic, please mention this when you arrive and we will do our best to help. Although there will not normally be anyone with you in the room during the scan, the radiographers can see and hear you all the time.

Why do I need this test?

The detailed information from this scan can be used by your doctors for diagnosis and/or treatment planning. There are several other tests that can detect cancers and polyps.

Conventional colonoscopy

This procedure allows your doctor to look inside your bowel using a narrow, flexible, tube-like camera called a colonoscope. Your doctor can inspect the wall of your bowel by looking directly at the bowel lining on a monitor.

Sigmoidoscopy

This is like a colonoscopy, but it only looks at the lower part of your bowel.

Your choice of test depends on several factors. CT colonography, for example, can be an easier and more comfortable procedure for some people to have than conventional colonoscopy. Your doctor will explain your options to you.

What are the risks with this test?

With modern X-ray equipment the radiation dose given is minimal and there are very strict working practices by which we are legally obliged to abide. Both the staff and equipment in this department are constantly monitored and checked. Whilst the radiation dose given during CT is higher than other x-rays, you are far more likely to benefit from this x-ray than suffer any harm.

Typical doses given for CT are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scan type</th>
<th>Approximate equivalent to normal background radiation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CT head</td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CT chest</td>
<td>3.6 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CT abdomen or pelvis</td>
<td>4.5 years</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Complications which may occur

- Discomfort and cramping, this usually settles very quickly
- Blurred vision, this is due to the Buscopan injection and usually settles within the hour.
  If your eyes become red and painful with blurred vision it is important that you seek urgent medical attention.
- Bleeding, this is very rare and only likely if you have existing bowel disease
- Making a hole (perforation) in the bowel, this is extremely rare and usually only occurs if there is an existing problem with the bowel wall.
- Allergic reaction, it is possible to react to the injection we give you. If you have any allergies or have reacted to drugs in the past please let the radiographer know at the start of the examination.

Female patients aged between 12-50 years

This test can only be done within the first 10 days following the start of your period. If your appointment is for a date outside this time limit please contact the department. Failure to do this may mean we cannot do your CT Colonography.

What do I need to do to prepare?

You will need to take a laxative and drink some iodine based x-ray dye over the two days before your scan. Your laxative, x-ray dye and diet instructions will be sent out by post as a package which may need to be collected from the post office if you are not home at the time of delivery.

If you are diabetic, have kidney problems or heart problems and have not spoken to a radiographer already please contact the department before you take the laxative or x-ray dye. We also need to know if you are allergic to iodine.

There are size and weight limits for our scanner (weight limit of 35.6 stone or 226kg). If you feel that this may apply to you please contact the department before you come for your appointment. You may wish to bring a dressing gown and slippers with you. We will provide you with a gown. You may be required to walk a short distance from a changing cubicle to the examination room through the