

Information for patients, families and carers

Small Bowel Capsule Endoscopy

What is small bowel capsule endoscopy?

A small bowel capsule endoscopy is a test that allows us to examine the lining of your small bowel (small intestine). The test may help identify the cause of your symptoms and can be used to investigate conditions such as unexplained bleeding, iron deficiency anaemia, coeliac disease, abnormal blood vessels (angiodysplasia), polyps and tumours within the small bowel.

During the procedure, you will be asked to swallow a capsule containing a tiny camera. The capsule is about the size of a large tablet. While some people find it slightly uncomfortable to swallow, it should not be painful.

You will wear a recording device and belt throughout the day. As the capsule travels naturally through your digestive system, it takes pictures of your small bowel and transmits these images to the recorder for review.

You can usually return to your normal daily activities, including work, while wearing the equipment. However, if your job involves strenuous physical activity, you may wish to arrange a day off or undertake lighter duties where possible. Gentle walking is encouraged.

The following day, you must return the recording equipment to the Endoscopy Unit between 8am-12pm.

Preparing for your test

- If you are taking iron tablets please stop these seven days before your appointment.
- Please inform the department if you have a history of swallowing problems or problems swallowing bread or meat.
- Your last meal should be no later than 4pm the day before your appointment.

On the day of your appointment

- Do not eat or drink anything, except for necessary medication with a sip of water.
- Wear loose fitting two-piece clothing.
- Bring in a list of all the medications that you take.
- Do not arrive too early for your appointment.

Swallowing the capsule

- On arrival to the endoscopy unit (1st floor, E block), please present at reception.
- A member of staff will discuss the procedure with you and give you the opportunity to ask questions. You will then be asked to sign a consent form.
- The recording equipment will be set up first (a belt against the skin and a recorder in a pouch).
- Water will then be provided to swallow the capsule.
- You should be able to leave the hospital straight away.

After swallowing the capsule

- You may drink water straight away.
- After five hours you may have a light snack (around 2pm).
- After 5pm you may return to your normal diet.
- You can take the equipment off if you see the capsule in the toilet or when you go to bed as long as this is after 9pm.
- If you do not see the capsule pass, this is usually not a cause for concern, as many people do not notice when it leaves their body.

Important information

- After swallowing the capsule, you should avoid strong electromagnetic fields, including MRI scans, until the capsule has passed, as this may cause injury.
- Please do not disconnect the equipment or remove the belt during the procedure.
- Take care whilst wearing it, and avoid sudden movements where possible.
- You can return to your normal daily activities immediately after the procedure.
- In most cases, the capsule passes naturally through the digestive system without causing any problems.

Possible risks and complications

Occasionally, the capsule may become delayed or trapped within the bowel. This is known as capsule retention and occurs in approximately 0.75% of patients.

If you develop severe or persistent abdominal pain, vomiting, abdominal swelling, or any other symptoms that concern you, you should attend your nearest Emergency Department for assessment.

In rare cases, where the capsule causes or contributes to a bowel blockage, further treatment, including surgery, may be required.

Technical issues, slow movement of the capsule through the stomach, or food remaining within the digestive tract can occasionally affect image quality and may result in an incomplete examination.

If you are unsure whether the capsule has passed, inform the MRI or X-ray department. An abdominal X-ray may be arranged to confirm that the capsule has left your body before any MRI scan takes place.

Results

A report will be sent to your consultant, who will discuss the results with you at your next outpatient appointment or write to you with the outcome.

If you are unable to attend your appointment, please contact us on 01204 390273.

If you require any further information, please contact the Endoscopy Unit on 01204 390390, extensions 143422 or 141805.

If you require a copy of this leaflet in any other language or format, such as large print or audio, please contact **01204 390193**.

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