



York and Scarborough  
Teaching Hospitals  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Having a Colonoscopy

Information for patients, relatives and carers

For more information, please contact:

**Endoscopy Unit**

York Hospital Patients:

The York Hospital  
Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE

Tel: 01904 726694

Scarborough and Bridlington Hospital Patients:

Scarborough Hospital  
Woodlands Drive, Scarborough, YO12 6QL

Tel: 01723 385141



If you become ill or cannot keep your appointment for any reason, please tell us as early as possible so that another patient can be offered treatment.

We will rearrange your appointment.

York, Scarborough and Bridlington patients please telephone the endoscopy waiting list team on:  
01904 724111 between 8am and 5pm.

To cancel your appointment out of hours, with at least 48 hours' notice, please use our online form:  
[www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk/appointment](http://www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk/appointment)

**If you receive a consent form in the post,** please **read and sign** this before your procedure and bring it with you.

If you have doubts that need discussing before signing please bring the form and discuss it with the nurses at admission.

**If you have a stoma, pacemaker, have diabetes, other health issues (listed on page 13), or are on blood thinning medication please see the advice given on pages 8-10 of this booklet and contact us before your appointment:**

If you are a York Hospital patient please contact the pre-assessment nurses on York: 01904 724527.

If you are a Scarborough/Bridlington patient, please phone the automated helpline on 01723 342905.

| <b>Contents</b>   | <b>Page</b> |
|---|-------------|
| Information about consent .....   | 5           |
| What is a colonoscopy? .....  | 6           |
| What are polyps and do we need to remove them? .....                                    | 7           |
| How do I prepare for my colonoscopy? .....  | 8           |
| What if I have a pacemaker? .....   | 9           |
| What if I have diabetes? .....  | 9           |
| What if I am on blood thinning medication? .....  | 10          |
| What about other medications? .....   | 11          |
| Do I need to change what I eat? .....   | 12          |
| What about other health issues? .....   | 15          |
| What happens when I arrive at the Endoscopy Unit? ..                                    | 16          |
| What happens before my colonoscopy? .....   | 18          |
| I have been told there will be trainees in the list. What<br>does this mean? .....      | 19          |
| Will I be awake during the procedure? .....   | 19          |
| What happens during the colonoscopy? .....  | 22          |
| I have been told that photos or videos may be taken,<br>why would they be needed? ..... | 23          |
| What are the risks in having a colonoscopy? .....                                       | 23          |
| What are the benefits of having a colonoscopy? .....                                    | 25          |
| What are the alternatives to a colonoscopy? .....                                       | 26          |
| What happens after the colonoscopy? .....   | 27          |
| When can I go home? .....   | 28          |
| What happens before I leave the Endoscopy Unit? .....                                   | 29          |
| When will I get my results? .....   | 29          |
| Instructions and advice for when you go home .....                                      | 30          |
| A checklist for patients .....  | 32          |

# **Information about consent**

This leaflet contains information about having a colonoscopy. It explains what will happen before, during and after the procedure. It also tries to answer some of the questions you may have.

If you do not fully understand anything about the procedure, please ask. We are there to help you and will always make time to listen to you and answer your questions.

You have been advised by your GP or hospital doctor to have this investigation.

## **This procedure requires your formal consent.**

If you are unable to keep your appointment, please notify the waiting list team as soon as possible: York and Scarborough/Bridlington hospital patients, phone 01904 724111. This will enable the staff to give your appointment to someone else and they will be able to arrange another date and time for you.

This booklet has been written to enable you to make an informed decision in relation to agreeing to the investigation. Please bring this booklet and the enclosed consent form with you when you attend for the procedure. You will notice that the consent form is duplicated (do not separate), a health professional will need to sign it before the procedure; you will be given a copy to keep.

The consent form is a legal document therefore please read it carefully. Once you have read and understood all the information, including the possibility of complications, and you agree to undergo the investigation, please **sign** and date the consent form.

If however there is anything you do not understand or wish to discuss further do not sign the form but bring it with you and sign it after you have spoken to a health care professional.

## **What is a colonoscopy?**

Colonoscopy is a way of looking at the inside of your colon (large bowel). It is carried out by someone with special training called an endoscopist. We carry out a colonoscopy in a specially designed department called the endoscopy unit.

The endoscopist uses a colonoscope, which is a long, slim, flexible instrument. It is about the thickness of an index finger and has a bright light and small lens at its tip. The colonoscope allows the endoscopist to view the inside of your colon on a video monitor.

The endoscopist can pass a smaller instrument down the colonoscope so that he can take a small sample of your tissue (biopsy) or remove small growths (polyps) from the wall of your colon.

## **What are polyps and do we need to remove them?**

A polyp is a clump of cells that grows from the inner lining of the large bowel that protrudes into its lumen (hollow centre). Most of these polyps are harmless but a small number can develop into cancer over time.

Removing polyps is an effective way of reducing the risk of developing bowel cancer. If we find polyps we can usually remove them painlessly during the examination.

## **How do I prepare for my colonoscopy?**

Please follow the advice on the next page about medications. You may need to stop some medications you are taking before your colonoscopy.

To allow the endoscopist to have a clear view of your colon, it must be empty. We will send you a laxative called Plenvu well in advance of your appointment with instructions about how to take it. This will be sent in a separate package, a time and date will be arranged for the Pre Assessment Nurses to ring you.

**Please be aware that Plenvu will cause you to have loose stools.**

Please follow the diet advice you have been given carefully and remember you can drink fluids (without milk) until two hours before your procedure.

You will need to be on a low residual diet 5 days prior to the procedure. Please see page 11 - 13

We may send other instructions depending on whether you have a morning or afternoon appointment. It is important you follow these.

If you normally wear reading glasses, please remember to bring them with you.

To ensure that the examination is carried out successfully, it is essential that you follow the instructions exactly.



**! If you have a stoma please contact us for advice:**

York Hospital patients: 01904 724527  
Scarborough/Bridlington Hospital patients: 01723 342905  
Please leave your details and we will get back to you.

## **What if I have a pacemaker?**

If you have any implantable cardiac device, such as a pacemaker or internal defibrillator please let us know as this may need adjusting on the day of your procedure.

York Hospital patients please call the pre-assessment nurses: 01904 724527.

Scarborough and Bridlington Hospital patients please call our automated helpline: 01723 342905

## **What if I have diabetes?**

We need to know if you have diabetes. If you have tablet or insulin treated diabetes we will need to give you additional advice about how to prepare for the procedure and how you take your medication. A diabetic booklet will be enclosed with your bowel preparation. If you have not received any specific diabetes information, please contact the following numbers for advice:

If you are being treated in York please ring the pre-assessment nurses on 01904 724527.

If you are being treated in Scarborough or Bridlington please ring the Endoscopy automated helpline number for advice on 01723 342905.

## **What if I am on blood thinning medication?**

If you take any of the following blood thinning medications, you need to let us know:

- Warfarin
- Apixaban
- Edoxaban
- Dabigatran
- Rivaroxaban
- Clopidogrel
- Ticagrelor
- Prasugrel
- Dipyridamole

### **If you are a York Hospital Patient:**

You will need to inform the pre-assessment nurses on 01904 724527.

### **If you are a Scarborough or Bridlington Hospital Patient:**

You will need to phone the automated helpline on 01723 342905.

We will advise whether or not you should continue taking these drugs in the days leading up to the procedure.

Although **Aspirin** is a medication which thins the blood it is safe to continue and we therefore do not need to know about this.

## **What about other medications?**

You must stop taking iron (ferrous sulphate or fumarate) tablets / multi Vitamin tablets for five days before your procedure.

You can continue any other medication as usual.

# Do I need to change what I eat?

Five days before your Colonoscopy, do not eat **foods containing fibre**. Please see guide below on what to eat and what to avoid:

| Foods                      | Avoid  | Allowed   |
|----------------------------|--|---|
| <b>Breads &amp; Flours</b> | Avoid; Wholemeal, granary, rye, seeded, brown bread or rolls, wholemeal flour  | Allowed; White bread or rolls, English muffins, plain bagels, white flour or cornflour e.g Yorkshire pudding                            |
| <b>Pasta &amp; Rice</b>    | Avoid; Wholemeal pasta, brown rice   | Allowed; White pasta/noodles, white rice, cous cous   |
| <b>Cereals</b>             | Avoid; Wholegrain cereals e.g. Weetabix, All Bran, Bran flakes, Fruit & Fibre, Shreddies, Shredded Wheat, Muesli, Porridge, Ready Brek, Bran, Crunchy Nut Cornflakes | Allowed; Rice or corn-based cereals e.g. Rice Krispies, Ricicles, Puffed Wheat, Coco Pops, Cornflakes, Frosties, Special K - (Original) |

| <b>Foods</b>                   | <b>Avoid</b>  | <b>Allowed</b>   |
|--------------------------------|---|--|
| <b>Nuts &amp; Seeds</b>        | <b>Avoid; All nuts, seeds and foods containing them</b>   | <b>Allowed; None</b>   |
| <b>Biscuits &amp; Snacks</b>   | <b>Avoid; all Cakes, Biscuits, Sweets</b>   | Allowed; Plain Ice Cream, Custard, <b>Milk (until 6 hours before the procedure)</b> Natural Plain Yoghurt.                                       |
| <b>Meat &amp; Alternatives</b> | Avoid; Red meat or any dishes containing vegetables, Quorn, sausages, pies  | Allowed; White meats, skinless chicken, grilled or poached fish, eggs, cheese, Tofu  |
| <b>Other</b>                   | Avoid; Any foods containing ingredients listed above e.g. homemade vegetable or packet soups, jam or marmalade with pips or rind, any food with dried fruit | Allowed; Jam or marmalade without seeds, pips or rind, Clear soups, smooth condiment sauces e.g. ketchup, mayonnaise, mustard. Butter, margarine |

| <b>Foods</b>      | <b>Avoid</b>   | <b>Allowed</b>                                 |
|-------------------|--|--|
| <b>Fruit</b>      | <b>Avoid; All fruit, salad</b>   | <b>Allowed; None</b>                           |
| <b>Vegetables</b> | Avoid; Beans & pulses e.g. peas, beans, baked beans, lentils, kidney beans, soya beans, chickpeas.<br><br>All vegetables | <b>Allowed; Potatoes boiled or mashed only</b> |

## **What about other health issues?**

Please ring us as soon as possible if any of the following apply to you:

- You have had any previous infections of the heart valve (endocarditis)
- You have an abnormal or artificial heart valve or a blood vessel graft
- You have been advised that you need antibiotics or steroids before an operation or dental treatment.
- You have been informed that you are at risk of **CJD** or **vCJD** for public health purposes

### **If you are a York Hospital Patient:**

Phone the pre-assessment nurses on 01904 724527.

### **If you are a Scarborough or Bridlington Hospital Patient:**

Phone the automated helpline on 01723 342905.

# **What happens when I arrive at the Endoscopy Unit?**

Your appointment time is not the time we will do your procedure as you will be assessed by a nurse first.

**Please expect to be on the Unit for up to four hours.**

**We ask that you do not bring dependents with you that require caring needs as we are unable to facilitate this at your appointment.**

The nurses will introduce themselves and explain what will happen during your stay. You will be asked about any medical or medicine changes. We will also check your arrangements for going home and, if necessary, who will look after you.

The nurse will check your details and (if this has not already been done) ask you to sign a consent form (reference FYCON30-1 Colonoscopy/Flexible Sigmoidoscopy). If you have received a consent form in the post, and have signed it, they will check this. By signing the consent form you are saying that you:

- fully understand the procedure and sedation,
- fully understand the risks and benefits,
- are aware of the alternatives, and
- agree to have the examination.

Please ask if there is anything you do not fully understand about the procedure or if there is anything you are uncertain about. A copy of the consent form will be kept in your medical records, and you will also be



given a copy for your own records. You may change your mind and withdraw consent at any time, even after you have signed the form.

# **What happens before my colonoscopy?**

We will ask you to change into a hospital gown and disposable pants. Please bring a bag with you for your belongings.

A needle will be placed in your arm or hand. This is required if any sedation or stronger painkiller, is necessary.

We will take you to the examination room where we will check your identity as part of our safety procedures. You will have an opportunity to ask the doctor any questions you may have.

The endoscopist will check your details with you to ensure that you understand what procedure you are going to have and will answer any questions you may wish to ask.

We will ask you to lie on your left side. A nurse will stay with you during the procedure and help you to change position during the examination, if assistance is required.

We will be monitoring you throughout the procedure, a pulse oximeter will be placed to your finger.

## **I have been told there will be trainees in the list. What does this mean?**

We take the training of endoscopists very seriously. Our Trust is committed to teaching, training, and research to support the development of staff and improve health and healthcare in our community. We provide specific training lists for the next generation of endoscopists. All training lists have a reduced number of procedures in order to facilitate careful training. The training is always closely supervised by accredited endoscopists. In addition, we monitor all results and outcomes of both the trainees and the individual endoscopists. We also have a feedback mechanism, so trainees' progress is scrutinised and monitored. You can opt out if you do not want trainees to attend.

## **Will I be awake during the procedure?**

You do not need a general anaesthetic to have a colonoscopy so you will be awake during the procedure.

Some people don't need any pain relief at all.

However, if you do require pain relief the first instance, we offer you a medicine called Entonox<sup>®</sup> (a mixture of nitrous oxide gas & oxygen). This is breathed in through a special mouthpiece. It is a powerful pain-relieving agent and is used in labour pains. Which you can take as much or as little as you require. The nurse will explain to you, how to use. However, over usage can cause

nausea and light headedness. It will also make you feel relaxed. Most people are comfortable and do not need any further pain killers or sedatives.

However, if the Entonox<sup>®</sup> is not enough to make you comfortable and the endoscopist thinks you will benefit we can give you a strong painkiller and if necessary, a mild sedative as well. This will make you sleepy and relaxed. We give this via the needle in your arm/hand.

If you do have sedation we will give you some oxygen via a nasal cannula, which is two short plastic prongs that fit into each nostril. This is because sedation can depress your breathing.

Sometimes we also give a drug to relax your bowel wall.

If you have a sedative, you will be able to go home when we think you are ready.

If you do not have a sedative, you will recover much more quickly. You may drive yourself or use public transport only if you have **not** received sedation or strong pain relief.

Please see the following list of medication to help you identify if you need an accompanying adult to take you home.

Please note: Public transport means any type of transport that would not be able to turn around and bring you back to hospital if you felt unwell.

## **Entonox® (Gas and Air)**

You will be allowed to leave the unit 30 minutes after your procedure without adult supervision. You can then use public transport and drive. There are no other restrictions after this medication.

## **Fentanyl (strong pain relief)**

You will need adult supervision if you are discharged before one hour after having your procedure. You will not need adult supervision if discharged over an hour after your procedure. You must not drive or operate machinery for 24 hours.

## **Midazolam (sedative)**

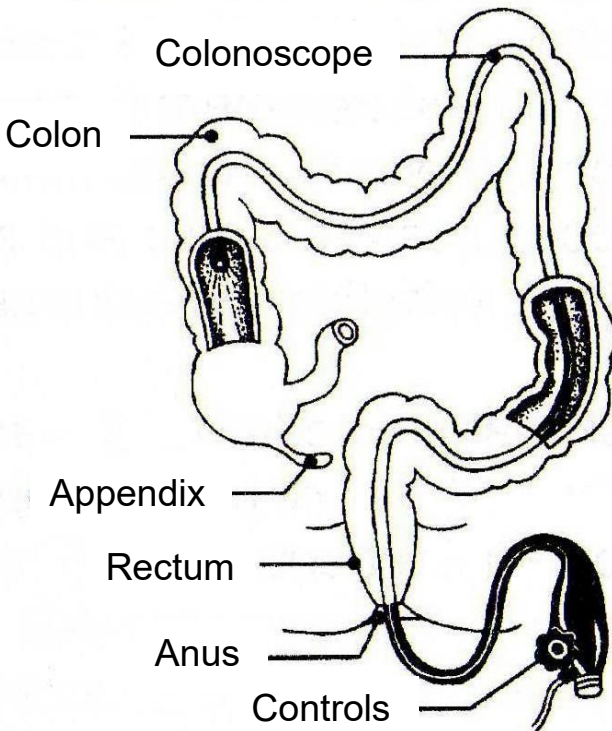
You will need adult supervision, recommended for 24 hours and a minimum of three hours. Avoid using public transport. You must not drive, operate machinery, drink alcohol, return to work, look after small children or sign legal documents for 24 hours.

## **Midazolam + Fentanyl**

You will need adult supervision, recommended for 24 hours and a minimum of four hours. Avoid using public transport. You must not Drive, operate machinery, drink alcohol, return to work, look after small children or sign legal documents for 24 hours.

# What happens during the colonoscopy?

You lay on your left side, but we may ask you to change your position during the examination. We insert the colonoscope gently through your anus and into your colon as shown in the diagram. We pass air through the colonoscope tube to distend the colon. This gives us a clearer view.



You may feel some wind-like discomfort or pain, but it will not last long. Do not worry if you pass wind during the procedure, this is normal and encouraged. You may also have the sensation of wanting to empty your bowels but, as your bowel is empty, this will not happen.

When the endoscopist has completed the examination, they will remove the colonoscope safely and painlessly. The procedure can take between 30 minutes and one hour.

## **I have been told that photos may be taken, why would they be needed?**

As part of your treatment, we may take photos of your bowel; these will be kept in your medical records. We may need to use these images for assessing lesions and discussing them with colleagues and ask them their opinion. We may also use the images for teaching purpose.

## **What are the risks in having a colonoscopy?**

Colonoscopy is a very safe procedure. The commonest 'side effect' is discomfort.

About 1 person in 200 will get some bleeding. Most of this bleeding will be minor and may stop on its own. However, if you are worried, please contact the hospital.

In an even smaller number of cases (about 1 in 1000) there may be tearing of the bowel wall (perforation). If a perforation occurs, urgent treatment is essential and we will admit you to hospital, depending on the perforation, they can heal on their own or surgery may be required.

The risk of bleeding and perforation occurring is slightly higher if we are doing a biopsy or removing polyps.

There is a small risk that the sedative will depress your breathing. We will monitor you so that, if this does happen, we can treat it.

All the instruments we use are cleaned thoroughly by hand and machine using special disinfectant so the chance that they will pass on infection is extremely small.



## **Does colonoscopy detect all large bowel polyps or tumours?**

Having a colonoscopy means we have looked at the large bowel carefully with the best available test. However, there is still a very small chance that we may have missed significant polyps or tumours. It is also possible that if the examination is not successful, we may need to do further investigations i.e CT Colonography.

If you develop new symptoms, it is important that you discuss this with your GP.

## **What are the benefits of having a colonoscopy?**

We can see the inside of your colon. This allows us to diagnose your problem quickly and safely. We are also able to take a biopsy and remove polyps, you will not feel these been taken.

The recovery time after colonoscopy is quick and the risk of complications is low.

## **What is the alternatives to a colonoscopy?**

Having a CT colonography is also an alternative. This is less invasive than a conventional colonoscopy. It involves using a CT scanner and x-rays to produce two- and three-dimensional images of the entire colon and rectum. The views are very good, but it involves exposure to radiation. A CT colonography does not allow us to do a biopsy or remove polyps. Like colonoscopy, you would need to have a full bowel preparation with a low residual diet and a laxative.

Having a colonoscopy means that you are not exposed to radiation.

However, your consultant has considered alternatives and has decided the best and most appropriate treatment would be to complete a colonoscopy.

## **What happens after the colonoscopy?**

After the procedure, you will be taken to the recovery area to rest until we are happy that you are awake enough to sit in a chair. You will then be offered a hot drink and biscuits. During this time, you may feel a little bloated with wind pains but these usually settle quickly. The nurse will explain the results of the examination and any treatment you have had. We will give you a written report.

Sometimes we prescribe treatment or arrange further tests.

We will also send the report to your referring doctor and to your GP.

## When can I go home?

It is essential that you have someone to accompany you home unless you have had no sedative drugs or Entonox<sup>®</sup> only. A responsible person must accompany you for a **minimum of three hours** after the last dose of sedative or a minimum of four hours if you have had both a sedative and strong pain relief, but we recommend supervision for a full 24 hours. These precautions are very important. If you feel that you cannot make these arrangements, please let us know in plenty of time before your procedure by contacting us:

If you are being treated in York, contact the pre-assessment nurses on 01904 724527.

If you are being treated in Scarborough or Bridlington phone our automated helpline on 01723 342905.

If you have had a sedative, you must not drive yourself, operate machinery, drink alcohol, return to work, look after small children or sign legal documents for at least 24 hours following your examination.

## **What happens before I leave the Endoscopy Unit?**

A nurse will go through the discharge instructions with you and tell you about the care you need at home. The nurse will give you any necessary discharge advice.

Please ask if you are unsure of any of the instructions or if you have any concerns, please ring us:

If you are being treated in York, contact the pre-assessment nurses on 01904 724527.

If you are being treated in Scarborough or Bridlington phone our automated helpline on 01723 342905.

## **When will I get my results?**

If biopsies have been taken or polyps removed, it generally takes approximately six weeks for the results to be available. If your consultant does not contact you after six weeks, please ring your GP.

# **Instructions and advice for when you go home**

## **Can I have a shower or bath?**

You may have a shower or bath as usual. If you do so within 24 hours following your colonoscopy, you may feel lightheaded or faint. We suggest you leave the bathroom door unlocked and arrange for someone to check on you from time to time. You may use any safety equipment that you usually use.

## **When can I resume my day-to-day activities?**

You may resume your day-to-day activities 24 hours after your colonoscopy, if sedation was given. Otherwise you can resume your daily activities when you feel safe to.

## **What should I do if I have any problems or worries about my colonoscopy after going home?**

If you have problems in the first 24 hours after you leave hospital, please contact us.

Please telephone the Endoscopy Unit on:

York Hospital Patients: 01904 726694

Scarborough and Bridlington  
Hospital Patients: 01723 385141

Out of hours, please telephone the hospital on:

York: 01904 631313 or

Scarborough and Bridlington 01723 368111

and ask for the 'on call surgical registrar'.

If you have problems after 24 hours,  
please contact your GP.

## A checklist for patients

- Bring your consent form with you to your appointment.
- Do follow the advice given on diet and take your laxatives as instructed.
- Please ring us if you have a pacemaker or are on blood thinning medication, we should be aware of this whilst been Pre Assessed.
- Do bring a clean dressing gown and slippers with you if you wish.
- Do bring a bag with you for your belongings, as you will need to change into a hospital gown.
- Please bring a list of your medications with you.
- Do bring something to help pass the time while you wait on the Endoscopy Unit, e.g. books, magazines.
- If you normally wear reading glasses or hearing aids, please remember to bring them with you.
- Important:** please see the list of medication in this booklet to help you identify if you need an accompanying adult to take you home.
- Do arrange your transport home. You may wish to bring change if you are going to use the hospital car park.
- It is essential that you arrange for an adult to accompany you home and we strongly advise that an adult stays with you for 24 hours following



sedation. Remember you must not drive for at least 24 hours following sedation.

- Your appointment time is not the time you will have the procedure, as a nurse will assess you first.

Please use this space to make a note of any questions you have or to list any items you need to bring with you.

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The section on consent is taken with adaptations from the British Society of Gastroenterology patient leaflet “colonoscopy – the procedure explained” dated June 2005. Used with permission.

## **Tell us what you think of this leaflet**

We hope that you found this leaflet helpful. If you would like to tell us what you think, please contact:

York Hospital patients contact: Sister Michelle Robinson, Endoscopy Unit, The York Hospital, Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE, telephone 01904 726690.

Scarborough/Bridlington Hospital patients contact: Sister Sue Thomson, Endoscopy Unit, Scarborough Hospital, Woodlands Drive, Scarborough, YO12 6QL, telephone 01723 385106.

## **Teaching, training and research**

Our Trust is committed to teaching, training and research to support the development of health and healthcare in our community. Healthcare students may observe consultations for this purpose. You can opt out if you do not want students to observe. We may also ask you if you would like to be involved in our research.

## **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)**

PALS offers impartial advice and assistance to patients, their relatives, friends and carers. We can listen to feedback (positive or negative), answer questions and help resolve any concerns about Trust services.

PALS can be contacted on 01904 726262, or email [yhs-tr.patientexperienceteam@nhs.net](mailto:yhs-tr.patientexperienceteam@nhs.net).

An answer phone is available out of hours.



# Leaflets in alternative languages or formats

If you would like this information in a different format, including braille or easy read, or translated into a different language, please speak to a member of staff in the ward or department providing your care.

Patient Information Leaflets can be accessed via the Trust's Patient Information Leaflet website:  
[www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk/your-visit/patient-information-leaflets/](http://www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk/your-visit/patient-information-leaflets/)

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Owner   | Mr J Roos, Endoscopy Lead, Surgery, York<br>Dr P Kant, Endoscopy Lead, Medicine, York<br>Dr A Muddu, Consultant Gastroenterologist, Scarborough |
| Date first issued   | December 2000   |
| Review Date   | April 2027  |
| Version   | 15 (issued April 2024)  |
| Approved by   | Endoscopy Leads, York and Scarborough   |
| Linked to consent form  | FYCON30-1 Colonoscopy or flexible sigmoidoscopy v5.3  |
| Document Reference  | PIL 84 v15  |
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