

Having a CT scan of your large bowel (CT colonogram) with Gastrografin drink

Department of Radiology

Information for Patients

Last reviewed: January 2024

Updated: January 2026

Next review: January 2027

Leaflet number: 6 Version: 15.3

Introduction

Please read your appointment letter carefully to check which hospital your appointment is at. This leaflet tells you about your examination. Please read it carefully as it has important information and instructions.

Contact details for the radiology department are on your appointment letter and the end of this leaflet.

What is a CT colonogram?

A CT scan is an X-ray examination. It gives much more information than a normal X-ray. It produces detailed images of your organs and blood vessels.

A CT colonogram looks at the large bowel (colon). It is an alternative test to a colonoscopy (camera test).

Some patients may need both a colonoscopy and the CT scan.

Important information for patients who are able to get pregnant

The CT scan uses X-rays. If there is any chance that you may be pregnant, please contact the Radiology department as soon as possible.

For patients who have menstrual periods and are aged 10 to 55 this examination must be done within 10 days of the start of your period unless there is no chance that you could be pregnant. If your appointment is outside the 10 days please contact the Radiology Department to rebook your scan.

At your appointment, you will be asked to confirm the first day of your last period before the examination starts. Please bring this information with you.

**Health information and support is available at www.nhs.uk
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

Visit www.uhleicester.nhs.uk for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact uhl-tr.informationforpatientsmailbox@nhs.net

If you have any special requirements

If you need an interpreter, or if you have any special requirements please contact the Radiology department for more information.

Important information for patients with diabetes

This leaflet includes specific information for people with diabetes who may be on insulin and/ or tablets.

Before your scan you may need to change your diabetes medicine.

If you have diabetes please contact your normal diabetes care provider. They will be able to give advice on managing your **medicine** for this scan.

If you have diabetes you should have been given a morning appointment. If you have not, please contact the Radiology department on 0116 258 8765. It may be that we are not aware that you have diabetes.

Please follow the preparation instructions on pages 4 and 5 including those in grey.

- If you are taking diabetes **medicine** you may be at an higher risk of having a 'hypo' (low blood glucose) when you follow the eating and drinking instructions before this test.
- Symptoms of a hypo include sweating, shakiness, blurred visions, light-headedness.
- To avoid this we recommend you follow the instructions in the table on pages 4 and 5. **Please regularly check your blood glucose. Please make sure you have extra glucose drinks/ glucose tablets at home.**
- Examples of suitable glucose drinks include Lucozade, fizzy drinks and clear fruit juices. This does not include diet or non-sugar versions.

How do I get ready for the scan?

Please read the instructions on pages 4 and 5. This tells you how to get ready for your scan.

You will need to change what you eat and drink for the 2 days before the scan.

Make sure you take the 2 types of medicine on time as directed.

- The first medicine is called bisacodyl (Ducolax). This is a laxative and makes you poo more to clear your bowel. This makes the inside of your bowel show up better on the scan pictures.
- The next medicine is gastrografin. This "paints" any poo still inside. This also helps us to get a clearer scan.

Important safety information

Do not drink the gastrografin liquid or bisacodyl if you have:

- an allergy to gastrografin, iodine, bisacodyl or preservatives.

Please contact the Radiology department for advice on 0116 258 8765.

You may also have an injection of a colourless liquid called contrast liquid for your scan. This has iodine in it. It is removed from your body by your kidneys in your pee (urine) or at your routine dialysis if you have dialysis.

Please tell the staff when you arrive if:

- **You are allergic to iodine or rubber (latex),** have any other allergies or have asthma.
- **You have had a reaction in the past to a contrast liquid injected into a vein (intravenous contrast).** This is the dye used for kidney X-rays and CT scanning and X-rays of your heart and blood vessels.
- **You are on kidney (renal) dialysis or have any problems with your kidneys.**
- **You have diabetes.**

Some patients get a warm feeling and a metallic taste when the injection is given and sometimes may feel sick. If you do get these feelings they usually last about 1 minute. Please let the staff who are with you know if you get these feelings. Some patients will also have the feeling that they are passing pee but they are not actually doing so. This is also normal.

Advice about the medicine

Needing to go to the toilet more:

Taking these medicines may make you poo (open your bowels) more often and it may be more watery (diarrhoea). You should make sure that you have easy access to a toilet on the day before the scan and on the morning of the scan before you come to hospital. The diarrhoea can be quite bad.


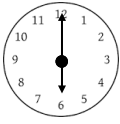
Do not worry if you have not been to the toilet often. The test can still be done.

Birth control (contraceptive) pill:

If you take the oral birth control pill, sometimes it does not work because of the diarrhoea caused by the medicine.

You should take other precautions for the rest of your menstrual cycle if you want to keep your chance of getting pregnant as low as possible.

Instructions on how to get ready for your CT colonogram

<p>3 days before your scan</p>	<p>Stop any iron or anti-diarrhoea tablets you may be taking. Continue all other medicine until you come for your scan.</p>
<p>2 days before your scan</p>	<p>Stop eating high fibre foods including bran, bran-containing cereal, brown bread, brown rice, whole-wheat pasta, fruit and vegetables.</p> <p>Food you can have: White rice, white bread, white pasta, boiled or poached eggs, cream sauces, fish, chicken, thin soups, cheese, jellies, ice-cream and powder based desserts such as custard or plain lassi.</p> <p>Drink plenty of clear fluids such as water, clear soups, strained fruit juice (without pulp), drinks made with beef and yeast extracts, squash, and tea and coffee with a small amount of milk only.</p> <p>Take 4 tablets (total of 20mg) of bisacodyl (Ducolax) with your evening meal. Remember this is a gentle laxative.</p> <p>Advice about taking bisacodyl:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you usually take laxatives, stop taking them this evening. Take the bisacodyl given to you instead. • Do not take bisacodyl at the same time as indigestion medicines (antacids) or with milk / dairy products. These stop bisacodyl from working properly, Antacids can make bisacodyl irritate your stomach. This can cause indigestion or cause you to be sick (vomit). • Leave a gap of 1 hour before or after taking bisacodyl or milk/dairy products. <p>If you have diabetes - take all diabetes medicine as normal.</p>
<p>The day before your scan</p> <p>10am </p> <p>6pm </p>	<p>Do not eat any solid food today.</p> <p>You can have clear soups (strained chicken noodle soup, vegetable broth), jelly, ice-cream, custard, plain lassi, Complan drinks, Bovril and Oxo drinks, yeast extracts, water, clear juices, fizzy drinks, coffee and tea (with milk if preferred). Drink as much tea or water as you like, but take at least 1/4pint (150mls) of fluid every hour on the hour during the daytime.</p> <p>At 10.00 am: Drink 40mls gastrografin – mix it with an equal amount of water. You may add some fruit juice or cordial for flavour.</p> <p>At 6.00pm: Drink 40mls gastrografin – mix it with an equal amount of water. You may add some fruit juice or cordial for flavour.</p> <p>If you have diabetes - please see the extra advice on the next page</p>

The day before your scan	Continued from previous page.
	<p>If you have diabetes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You can continue drinking plenty of fluids and have glucose drinks as meal replacements. If you are on insulin, reduce your insulin dose by half. If you are on diabetic tablets do not take them. Check your blood glucose if you are able to.
On the day of your scan	<p>Do not eat any solid food.</p> <p>You may drink water or clear sugary drinks such as squash or cordial, tea and coffee with little milk.</p> <p>You can take any medicine that you usually take (except any laxatives).</p>
When you wake up in the morning of your scan	<p>Drink 20mls gastrografin – mix it with an equal amount of water. You may add some fruit juice or cordial for flavour.</p>
	<p>If you have diabetes:</p> <p>Morning of the appointment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not take insulin / diabetic tablets. Re-check your blood glucose before you get to the hospital. You can continue drinking plenty of fluids right up to the scan. Make sure you have glucose drinks with you. Bring your insulin / diabetic tablets and a snack / drink with you to the hospital to have after the scan if needed. After the scan, re-check your blood glucose. Take your diabetes medicine after the scan and when eating.
After the appointment - all patients	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eat as usual. Continue to drink plenty of fluids for the next 2 days. Take all medicines as usual, unless told differently during the appointment.

What do I do on the day of my scan?

- Check the table above for your eating and drinking instructions today.
- Bring with you a list of your medicines, allergies and medical problems.** This will help us if we need to give you any medicines during your scan. The radiographer doing your scan will ask you if you have any allergies, diabetes or any heart problems.
- You may want to bring something to eat and drink** to have after the scan. This may be a good idea if you have diabetes or if you need to wait for ambulance transport to take you home.

Who will be doing my scan?

A doctor who specialises in X-ray tests (a radiologist) or a specialist radiographer who has trained to do CT colonograms will do your scan.

There may be another member of staff in the room to help.

As we are a teaching hospital a student may also be in the room. If you do not want this, you can ask that a student is not in the room when you have your scan.

What happens during my scan?

- When you get to the Radiology Department you will be shown to the waiting area.
- We will show you to a changing cubicle so you can take off some of your clothes and put on a hospital gown.
- We will take you into the scan room. We will talk to you about the scan. You can ask any questions that you may have.
- We will ask you to lie down on the scan table.
- Before the scan we will give you a small injection into a vein in your arm. The injection is called **Buscopan**. This relaxes your bowel and prevents spasm so you should feel less discomfort. This improves the pictures that are taken. The injection may make your eyesight blurred but this should get better after about 30 minutes.
- A small lubricated tube will be inserted into your bottom (rectum).
- Gas will be passed through the tube into your bottom to inflate the large bowel. This makes it easier for all the surfaces of the bowel to be seen clearly during the scan.
- The gas will make you feel bloated as if you want to pass wind (fart). It is very important that you hold onto the gas that is put inside.
- When the gas is in your bowel, you will have the scan. You may need to have the scan done more than once with you lying in different positions. If you have problems turning, the staff will help you turn into the right position.
- You may also have an injection of a colourless liquid which shows up on X-rays and CT scans (contrast liquid). This is so that your blood vessels can be seen better on your scan. The injection goes through the needle already in your arm. The supervising radiologist will decide this on the day. You will be told if you need this.

How long will it take?

You may be in the Radiology Department for up to 90 minutes.

The CT scan takes between 10 and 30 minutes. The time will vary for each patient.

What happens after my scan?

- We take the needle in your arm out.
- We will take you to the toilet so you can get rid of the gas.
- After this you can go home.
- You may eat and drink as usual. You may bring a snack to eat after the scan. This would be particularly useful if you are travelling to and from the hospital by ambulance transport.

How do I get my results?

You will not get the results straight away. A Radiologist or specially trained radiographer will look at your scan pictures. The results will be sent to a specialist team in the hospital (General Surgery team) to be checked. They will contact you with the results.

We will give you an aftercare sheet after the scan. This will tell you more details.

Are there any side effects or risks?

We have included the most common side effects and risks in this leaflet. The possibility of these happening is different for each person.

- **Tummy pain and bloating:** You may feel pain and bloating (trapped wind) in your tummy. This is from air that was put into your bowel during the scan. This may last for about 2 hours. Eating and drinking normally will help this to pass. If you have any problems with this after the scan please speak to a member of staff.
- **Hole in the bowel (perforation):** this happens in about 1 in 3000 patients. **Please go to your nearest Emergency Department (A&E) if you have any of these symptoms in the next 4 days: increasing tummy pain and discomfort, bad (severe) tummy pains, sweating and / or feeling sick (nausea) or feeling generally unwell.** You may need to stay in hospital overnight for care. Most patients get better without any more treatment.
- **Symptoms with your eye:** if you had an injection of Buscopan during the scan, the muscles of your eyes may have relaxed as well as the muscles of your bowel. This may cause blurred vision in some patients. If your vision is blurred, this usually only lasts for about 30 minutes. **Do not drive until your eyesight returns to normal.**

If you have any pain in your eyes in the next 24 hours, go to your nearest eye casualty straight away. Tell the doctor that you have had an injection of Buscopan and show them this leaflet. In Leicester the Eye Casualty department is at Leicester Royal Infirmary.

- **Dry mouth** - the injection of Buscopan may cause you to have a dry mouth. This will not last long.
- **Side effects from the contrast liquid** - you may get a warm feeling and/ or a metallic taste when the injection is given. This can make you feel sick. If you do get these feelings they usually last about 1 minute.



- **Reaction to contrast liquid** - Some patients may be allergic to the contrast liquid. You may have symptoms such as feeling or being sick (nausea or vomiting), or a rash. If you get any of these symptoms at the hospital, tell the doctor, nurse or other staff looking after you. If you start to get these symptoms at home you should contact your GP or call 111.

Despite these side effects and risks your doctor believes you should have this scan. There are also risks from missing a serious problem which could be detected from this scan.

What are the risks from exposure to radiation in this examination ?

The main risk from exposure to X-rays is a higher risk of getting a cancer in the future. This risk is thought to be very small.

We are all exposed to natural background radiation every day of our lives. This comes from the sun, the food we eat, and the ground. Each test that uses X-rays gives a dose on top of this natural background radiation.

The risks of radiation are slightly higher for an unborn child. We must ask all girls age 10 to 15 years and all patients aged 16 to 55 years about their periods and/or possibility of being pregnant.

The benefits of having this test are likely to outweigh any possible risks. The risks of not having the test could be greater. We try to keep your exposure to X-rays as low as possible.

What if I need to talk to someone?



If you have any questions or concerns, or cannot make the appointment:

Please call the Radiology department on **0116 258 8765** and select **option 3**. Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm, but not on bank holidays.

Any questions?

If you have any questions you can write them down. This is to remind you to ask when you come for your treatment.

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔
على هذه المعلومات بلغةٍ أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل
જો તમને અન્ય ભાષામાં આ માહિતી જોઈતી હોય, તો નીચે આપેલ નંબર પર કૃપા કરી ટેલિફોન કરો

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਗਏ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ।

Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić pod podany niżej numer telefonu

If you would like this information in another language or format such as EasyRead or Braille, please telephone 0116 250 2959 or email uhl-tr.equalitymailbox@nhs.net