

Information about...

CAPSULE ENDOSCOPY

CAPSULE ENDOSCOPY

You have been advised to have a test called a capsule endoscopy

What is capsule endoscopy?

This small capsule contains a tiny camera which can take 2-4 images per second for 8 hours. It has been specifically developed to view the small bowel.

Capsule endoscopy is used mainly to try and pinpoint bleeding in hidden areas in the small bowel. Capsule endoscopy is also useful for tracking small bowel tumours and obscure abdominal pain.

The capsule is swallowed and travels, just like piece of food, through the gullet, stomach, small bowel and into the large bowel. Recording probes, taped onto the abdomen, track the progress of the capsule as it makes its way through the gastrointestinal system. The images obtained by the capsule are transmitted to a data-recorder worn in a harness around the waist.

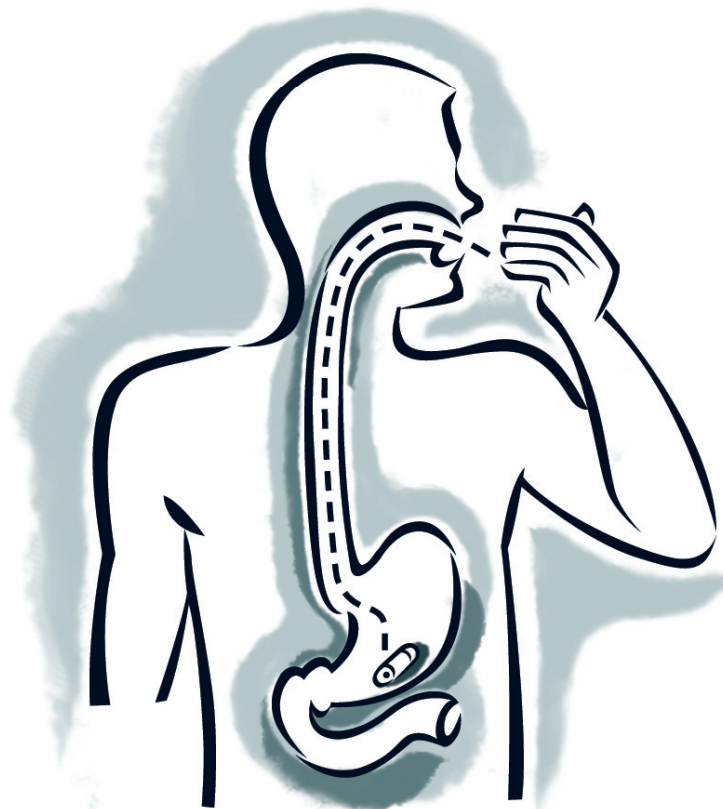


What do I need to do to prepare for the capsule?

You should fast (no food or drinks)

6 hours before undergoing capsule endoscopy. Diabetics should withhold their diabetic medication during the fasting period. If you take insulin, this should be discussed with your doctor.

Often, no bowel preparation is required for capsule endoscopy; however, your doctor may suggest that only a fluid meal is taken the night before the procedure. No special diet is required but strongly coloured foods and iron tablets should be avoided for 24 hours before the examination.



What happens during the procedure?

A harness, holding the data recorder, is worn for 8 hours after you swallow the capsule. You are encouraged to undertake gentle activity while wearing the harness as this will aid the progress of the capsule through the bowel.

No fluids should be taken for 2 hours after the capsule is swallowed and solid food is not permitted to be eaten for 4 hours afterwards. Do not swallow chewing gum during the examination.

A glass of water is permitted when swallowing the capsule and a substance called "simethicone"

is often added to this to prevent “bubbles” which can interfere with the pictures transmitted by the capsule.

What happens after the procedure?

After 8 hours, information from the data-recorder is downloaded onto a computer. More than 50,000 images are composed into a video for viewing and reporting by the doctor.

The capsule is single use only and does not need to be retrieved. At some stage, usually 1-3 days later, the capsule will be passed into the toilet and can be flushed into the sewerage system. Most patients don't notice the passage of the capsule.

REMEMBER

you must not eat solid foods for 4 hours after swallowing the capsule.

Are there any risks?

Capsule endoscopy is a very safe procedure. Less than 1 patient in 100 has difficulty swallowing the capsule. The capsule has a gel coating which makes it slippery when wet and aids swallowing.

Approximately 1 in 100 patients retain the capsule in the bowel. This may occur if the bowel is narrowed or has some other unusual anatomy. Abdominal pain or nausea after swallowing the capsule is extremely rare and

should be reported immediately. If the capsule is retained inside the bowel it is not usually dangerous in the short term but open surgery may be needed to remove it.

Approximately 1 in 10 patients may have a slow small bowel transit on the day of the study and the capsule may not be seen to reach the large bowel on the capsule endoscopy recording. An abdominal X-ray will then be arranged two (2) weeks later to check that the capsule has passed out of the bowel.

Patients wearing the harness and data-recorder are advised to stay away from large radio transmitters (eg - TV transmission towers) and are advised not to visit airports and major shopping centres where the harness could trigger security screening equipment.

Who can I contact if I have any questions?

If you have any questions or need advice please consult your doctor.



This information booklet has been designed by the Digestive Health Foundation as an aid to people who will undergo a capsule endoscopy or for those who wish to know more about it. This is not meant to replace personal advice from your medical practitioner.

The Digestive Health Foundation (DHF) is an educational body committed to promoting better health for all Australians by promoting education and community health programs related to the digestive system.

The DHF is the educational arm of the Gastroenterological Society of Australia, the professional body representing the Specialty of gastrointestinal and liver disease in Australia. Members of the Society are drawn from physicians, surgeons, scientists and other medical specialties with an interest in GI disorders.

Since its establishment in 1990 the DHF has been involved in the development of programs to improve community awareness and the understanding of digestive diseases.

Research and education into gastrointestinal disease are essential to contain the effects of these disorders on all Australians.

Further information on a wide variety of gastrointestinal conditions is available on our website.