

PATIENT GUIDE

Colonoscopy

Preparation & What to Expect



A clear, simple guide to help you prepare for your colonoscopy, covering what to do beforehand, what happens on the day, and what to expect during recovery.

Under the care of **Dr Brad Bidwell** · MBBS, BSc.(Hons), PhD, FRACS

ABOUT THE PROCEDURE

What is a colonoscopy?

A colonoscopy is a routine examination of the large bowel (colon and rectum). Using a thin, flexible tube with a small camera on the end, called a colonoscope, Dr Bidwell can view the lining of your bowel on a screen in fine detail. It is one of the most effective ways to investigate bowel symptoms and to detect polyps or bowel cancer early, often before symptoms appear.

If small growths called **polyps** are found, they can usually be removed painlessly during the same procedure. Small tissue samples (biopsies) may also be taken for testing. The examination itself typically takes **20 to 30 minutes**, and you will be sedated so you remain comfortable throughout.

Why preparation matters

Your bowel must be completely clean and empty so Dr Bidwell can see the bowel wall clearly. Careful preparation is the single most important thing you can do, and it directly affects how accurate and safe your procedure will be. Please follow the bowel-prep instructions provided with your kit closely.

Before your procedure

ONE WEEK BEFORE

- Tell the clinic about all medications you take, especially blood thinners (e.g. warfarin, aspirin, clopidogrel, apixaban, rivaroxaban), diabetes medications and iron tablets. Some may need to be paused or adjusted.
- Stop iron supplements about one week beforehand, as iron can darken the bowel lining.
- Arrange for a responsible adult to drive you home and stay with you for the rest of the day. You cannot drive or travel alone after sedation.

A FEW DAYS BEFORE

- Begin a low-fibre diet if advised: avoid wholegrains, nuts, seeds, raw vegetables, corn and skins.
- Collect your prescribed bowel-preparation kit from the pharmacy and read the instructions that come with it.

THE DAY BEFORE

- Switch to clear fluids only, such as water, clear broth, apple juice, black tea or coffee (no milk), and clear jelly or icy poles. Avoid anything red or purple in colour.
- Take your bowel-prep solution at the times shown in your kit instructions. It works by causing watery bowel motions that clean out the bowel, so staying near a toilet is wise.
- Keep drinking clear fluids throughout to stay hydrated.

What to expect

- 1. Arrival & check-in.** Come to the hospital at your scheduled time, having followed the fasting instructions in your kit (usually no food, and clear fluids stopped a set number of hours before). A nurse will check you in and confirm your details.
- 2. Meeting the team.** Dr Bidwell and the anaesthetic team will greet you, answer any questions and confirm your consent. A small cannula (drip) is placed in your hand or arm for the sedation.
- 3. The procedure.** You will rest on your side while sedation is given, keeping you relaxed and comfortable, and most people remember little or nothing of it. The colonoscope is gently passed to examine the bowel, and any polyps found are usually removed at the same time. It typically takes 20 to 30 minutes.
- 4. Recovery.** You will rest in the recovery area for about an hour as the sedation wears off. You may feel a little bloated from air used during the procedure, but this settles quickly and passing wind helps.

After your procedure

Results. Dr Bidwell will speak with you about what was found once you are awake. If biopsies or polyps were sent to the laboratory, those results follow later and will be discussed at your follow-up appointment.

Rest of the day. Because of the sedation, do not drive, operate machinery, sign legal documents or drink alcohol for the rest of the day. Have a responsible adult with you. You can usually eat normally once you feel ready, starting with something light.

When to seek help

Sedation and colonoscopy are very safe, but contact the clinic or seek medical care promptly if, in the days afterwards, you experience:

- Severe or persistent abdominal pain or a firm, swollen belly
- Heavy or ongoing rectal bleeding (more than a small smear)
- Fever, chills, dizziness or feeling generally unwell

If symptoms are severe or you are very unwell, call 000 or go to your nearest emergency department.

Contact the clinic

If you have any questions about your preparation or procedure, please get in touch, and the team will be happy to help.

Practice	Wangaratta General Surgeons
Location	Wangaratta Private Hospital, 134 Templeton Street, Wangaratta VIC 3677
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This guide provides general information only and is not a substitute for personalised medical advice. Always follow the specific instructions given to you by Dr Bidwell and the clinic, including those supplied with your bowel-preparation kit.