

CAPSULE

WHAT IS A CAPSULE ENDOSCOPY?

A capsule endoscopy is a diagnostic test where a pill-sized camera capsule is swallowed. The capsule slowly travels through your digestive system, the same way food would normally travel. This capsule is disposable and usually passed within 24 to 48 hours.

The capsule has its own built-in light and camera to take pictures of the inside of your small bowel. The images are transmitted to a radio recorder (a Walkman-like device) that is worn around your waist. You should not remove the belt at any time during the procedure.

This procedure is safe, non-invasive and permits examination of the entire small bowel. It does not require sedation. Capsule endoscopy allows visualisation of the lining of the small bowel, but this examination does not involve interventions such as biopsy or tissue ablation.

WHEN MIGHT I NEED A CAPSULE ENDOSCOPY?

Capsule endoscopy is used to identify small bowel pathology where there is overt or obscure blood loss into the gastrointestinal tract. Usually, gastroscopy and colonoscopy will have been done prior without identifying a cause for symptoms.

It can also be useful to confirm or rule-out small bowel inflammatory conditions such as Crohn's disease.



WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF A CAPSULE ENDOSCOPY?

Capsule endoscopy is a safe procedure with very few risks.

Occasionally the capsule does not pass the entire way through the small bowel during the period of recording. This may require a repeat examination. If the passage from the stomach into the small bowel is markedly delayed, we may recommend that the capsule is deployed directly into the small bowel at an upper GI endoscopy procedure (gastroscopy).

Approximately 1 person in every 100 will have difficulty passing the capsule. This can be due to a narrowing (stricture) due to a tumour, inflammation or scarring from previous surgery. This is not usually serious in the short term, but surgery may be needed to remove it.

If your doctor suspects there may be a stricture at the time you are referred, we may recommend that you swallow a patency capsule (a rapidly dissolving capsule without a camera) prior to the examination. This is the same size as the camera capsule but made of a substance that dissolves over 24-48 hours. This means that if the patency capsule becomes stuck it does not necessarily require an operation to remove it.