PillCam® COLON: Frequently Asked Questions

It’s important to have as much information as possible, especially when it comes to your health. Listed below are some of the most commonly asked questions about PillCam COLON capsule endoscopy. It is always best to consult with your doctor about all health decisions.

Q: What makes PillCam COLON unique?

A: PillCam COLON is the only minimally invasive colon exam that offers direct visualization of the colon while providing an optimal balance of low risk and high accuracy*. It allows your doctor to see your entire colon and assess its health—including the occurrence of polyps—in a way that is more convenient and less risky than other procedures.

*Greater than 50% sensitivity in detecting large polyps.

Q: Why might a doctor recommend PillCam COLON?

A: PillCam COLON is a safe and accurate alternative to other colon exams, especially for those who refuse other invasive colon exams and, for some patients who are at higher risk for complications from colonoscopy. As a diagnostic tool, it helps your doctor determine the cause of many unresolved symptoms such as abdominal pain, changes in bowel habits, unexplained weight loss, and rectal bleeding. It’s also an effective tool for colorectal cancer screening for those who do not have symptoms but may prefer a minimally invasive test or have risk factors.

Q: How does PillCam COLON work?

A: A tiny, wireless camera—contained in an easy-to-swallow and disposable capsule the size of a vitamin pill—transmits images as it travels naturally through your gastrointestinal tract. The images are sent to a data recorder that you wear on a belt, allowing the doctor to remotely view them and make a diagnosis. During the procedure, you are fully awake with no need for sedation and can leave the doctor’s office to go about your normal day.
Q: How many people have used PillCam capsules?

A: More than 1.6 million patients worldwide have used this safe and convenient PillCam technology for the small bowel, esophagus, and colon. Of these procedures, 1.5 million have used the small bowel PillCam, which has been available since 2001, and more than 10,000 have used PillCam COLON.

Q: How big is the PillCam COLON capsule?

A: The disposable capsule, which contains a miniature camera, is the size of a vitamin pill—specifically, it measures 11 mm x 32 mm and weighs less than 4 grams. Its small size and smooth surface help to make it easy to swallow.

Q: What happens to the capsule after the images have been collected and the procedure is complete?

A: The capsule passes naturally with a bowel movement, usually within 24 hours and without any discomfort. The capsule is disposable and does not need to be retrieved to collect the images from the procedure. If you are concerned that the capsule has not passed out of your body, please consult your doctor.

Q: Will I feel any pain or discomfort?

A: No. The video capsule has a smooth texture similar to over-the-counter capsules for pain relief. You should not feel any pain or discomfort when swallowing the capsule, while it moves through your colon, or as it is naturally eliminated during a bowel movement. Though, you could feel discomfort from the bowel preparation required for colon cleansing.

Q: How long is the procedure recovery?

A: Recovery is immediate because PillCam COLON requires no sedation.

Q: Who is not a candidate for PillCam COLON capsule endoscopy?

A: PillCam COLON is not right for everyone. If you have a swallowing disorder, known or suspected GI obstructions, strictures, or fistulas based pre-procedure testing and medical history, you should not have a PillCam COLON procedure. Additionally, if you have a cardiac
pacemaker or other implanted electromedical device, you should not undergo PillCam capsule endoscopy.

Like virtually all medical procedures, the PillCam COLON procedure also has some risks and disadvantages such as the need to have a follow-up colonoscopy if there are findings of the PillCam COLON procedure. Risks of PillCam capsule endoscopy include capsule retention, aspiration, or skin irritation. After ingesting the PillCam capsule and until it is excreted, patients should not be near any source of powerful electromagnetic fields, such as one created by an MRI device. Endoscopic placement may present additional risks. Medical, endoscopic, or surgical intervention may be necessary to address any of these complications, should they occur.

The risks associated with colon preparation are as follows: allergies or other known contraindication to any preparation agents or medications used for the PillCam COLON regimen, according to laxative medication labeling and per physician discretion.

Talk to your doctor about your risk factors and testing options to determine whether you are a suitable candidate for this procedure.

Information on this site should not be used as a substitute for talking with your doctor. Always talk with your doctor about diagnosis and treatment information.