

# Colonoscopy Clinical Care Standard - Informed consent

The Colonoscopy Clinical Care Standard includes specific requirements for informed consent in alignment with the National Safety and Quality Health Service (NSQHS) Standards.

## **National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards**

It is a requirement under the NSQHS Standards that health service organisations ensure that informed consent processes comply with legislation and best practice. The NSQHS- Partnering with Consumers Standard requires health service organisations to ensure patients give informed consent before care is provided.

Informed consent is a person's voluntary and informed decision to agree to a health care treatment, procedure or intervention that is made with adequate knowledge and understanding of the benefits and risks to them as well as alternative options available.

Good clinical practice includes appropriately timed provision of information and discussion to enable informed patient consent.

## **Colonoscopy Clinical Care Standard**

The Colonoscopy Clinical Care Standard developed by the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care and first published in 2018, was reviewed and updated in 2025. Implementing the Colonoscopy Clinical Care Standard is a requirement for all acute health service organisations providing colonoscopy services which are assessed against the National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards (see advisory [AS18/12: Implementing the Colonoscopy Clinical Care Standard](#)).

The Colonoscopy Clinical Care Standard relates to the care of adult patients undergoing colonoscopy for screening, diagnosis, treatment or surveillance. It covers the period from when a patient is referred for consideration of colonoscopy through to discharge, including planning for follow-up care.

The Colonoscopy Clinical Care Standard is relevant to healthcare settings including day procedure services, private hospitals and public healthcare services. All patients undergoing a colonoscopy should be offered the care set out in the nine quality statements of the Colonoscopy Clinical Care Standard.

Some aspects of the Standard are also relevant to primary healthcare, including some situations relating to informed consent such as the provision of bowel preparation by a GP.

## Obtaining informed consent for colonoscopy

Obtaining informed consent is a legal, ethical and professional requirement in Australian healthcare. Informed consent is achieved through a process of communication, discussion, and shared decision making. Key principles for informed consent are described in the Commission's [Informed Consent - Fact sheet for clinicians](#).

### Informed consent discussions

Informed consent for colonoscopy involves a conversation between the patient and a suitably qualified clinician, who may be a nurse or doctor. This conversation may occur face to face or by phone. Where patient care spans both primary and acute healthcare services, informed consent discussions may be the responsibility of different providers. Informed consent processes should begin before the patient starts bowel preparation for the colonoscopy. Patients must be provided with an opportunity to discuss the procedure with a suitably qualified clinician and to ask questions before providing consent. The discussion and process should support the patient's understanding and knowledge of the specific benefits and risks to them of the bowel preparation and the procedure. This discussion should be documented in the healthcare record.

Instructions (such as for bowel preparation and any related medication instructions) can be provided after the informed consent discussion has taken place.

### Informed consent documentation

A signed consent document may be obtained either at the time of discussing risks and benefits (before bowel preparation is started) or when the patient attends for the colonoscopy and their consent is confirmed, if that is the first face to face opportunity. However, the consent form must be signed before the colonoscopy is performed and a copy of the signed informed consent document must be included in the patient's healthcare record.

### Health service organisations are required to:

- Include requirements in the organisation's policies and procedures for informed consent discussions to occur prior to commencement of bowel preparation where the organisation is involved in its provision, and for written consent prior to all colonoscopy procedures
- Provide colonoscopists with access to the health service organisation's policies and procedures
- Ensure that there is evidence in the patient record of an informed consent discussion between the patient and a suitably qualified clinician prior to bowel preparation if the health service organisation is involved in advising on, supplying and/or providing bowel preparation
- Ensure a written consent document is signed by both the patient and colonoscopist prior to sedation for the colonoscopy
- File a copy of the signed informed consent document in the patient's healthcare record
- Monitor compliance with the organisation's informed consent policy and take action where gaps are identified.

### **Colonoscopists are required to:**

- Comply with the policies and procedures set by the health service organisation where the procedure is to be performed
- Ensure the informed consent discussions are conducted by suitably qualified clinicians
- Ensure patients are involved in informed consent discussions before starting bowel preparation, consistent with the Colonoscopy Clinical Care Standard
- Ensure information is provided to the patient in a way that supports shared decision-making and meets the communication needs of the patient
- Ensure patients confirm their informed consent in writing prior to the colonoscopy.

### **For more information**



Find out more about the Colonoscopy Clinical Care Standard and other resources for consumers, clinicians and healthcare services. Scan the QR code or use the link:

[safetyandquality.gov.au/colonoscopy-ccs](https://safetyandquality.gov.au/colonoscopy-ccs)

You can also email the NSQHS Standards Advice Centre at:

[AdviceCentre@safetyandquality.gov.au](mailto:AdviceCentre@safetyandquality.gov.au) or call 1800 304 056.

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