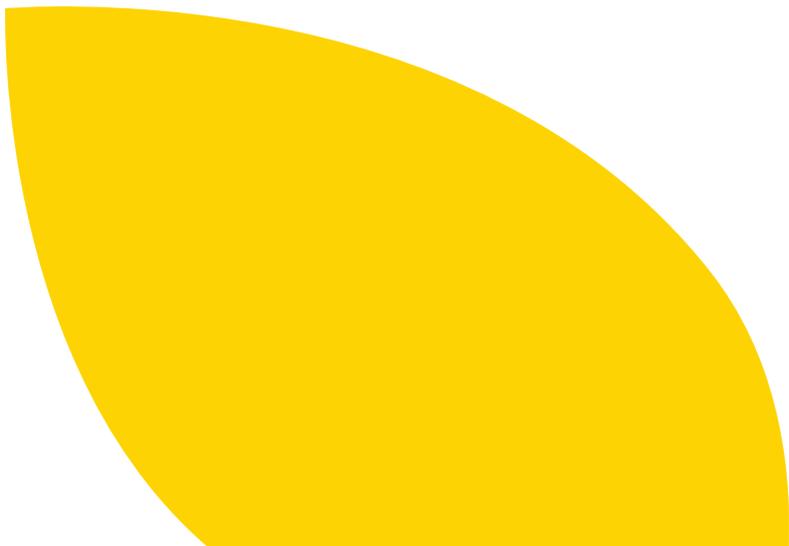




The Plain Facts:

Having a Colonoscopy.



What is a colonoscopy?

A colonoscopy is a special test where a doctor uses a small camera on the end of a long thin tube to see the inside of your bowel.

This test helps check if there is anything wrong with your bowel.

Your bowel is inside your body between your stomach and your bottom. It helps absorb water from food and store poo until you use the toilet.

Your doctor may have suggested you have a colonoscopy because:

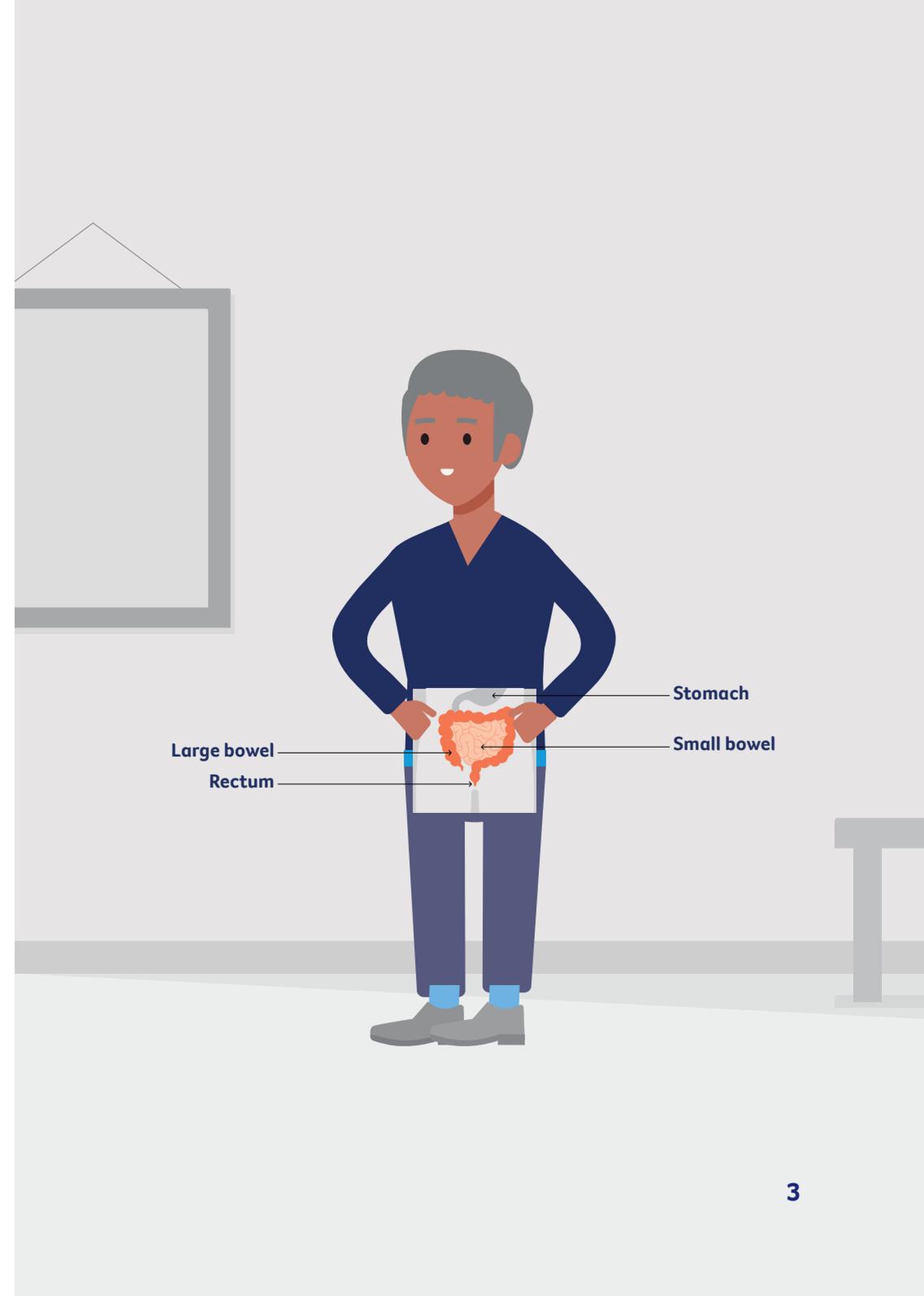
- you need another test after doing the at-home bowel cancer screening test

or

- doing the at-home test isn't suitable for you.

You can choose if you want to have the colonoscopy.

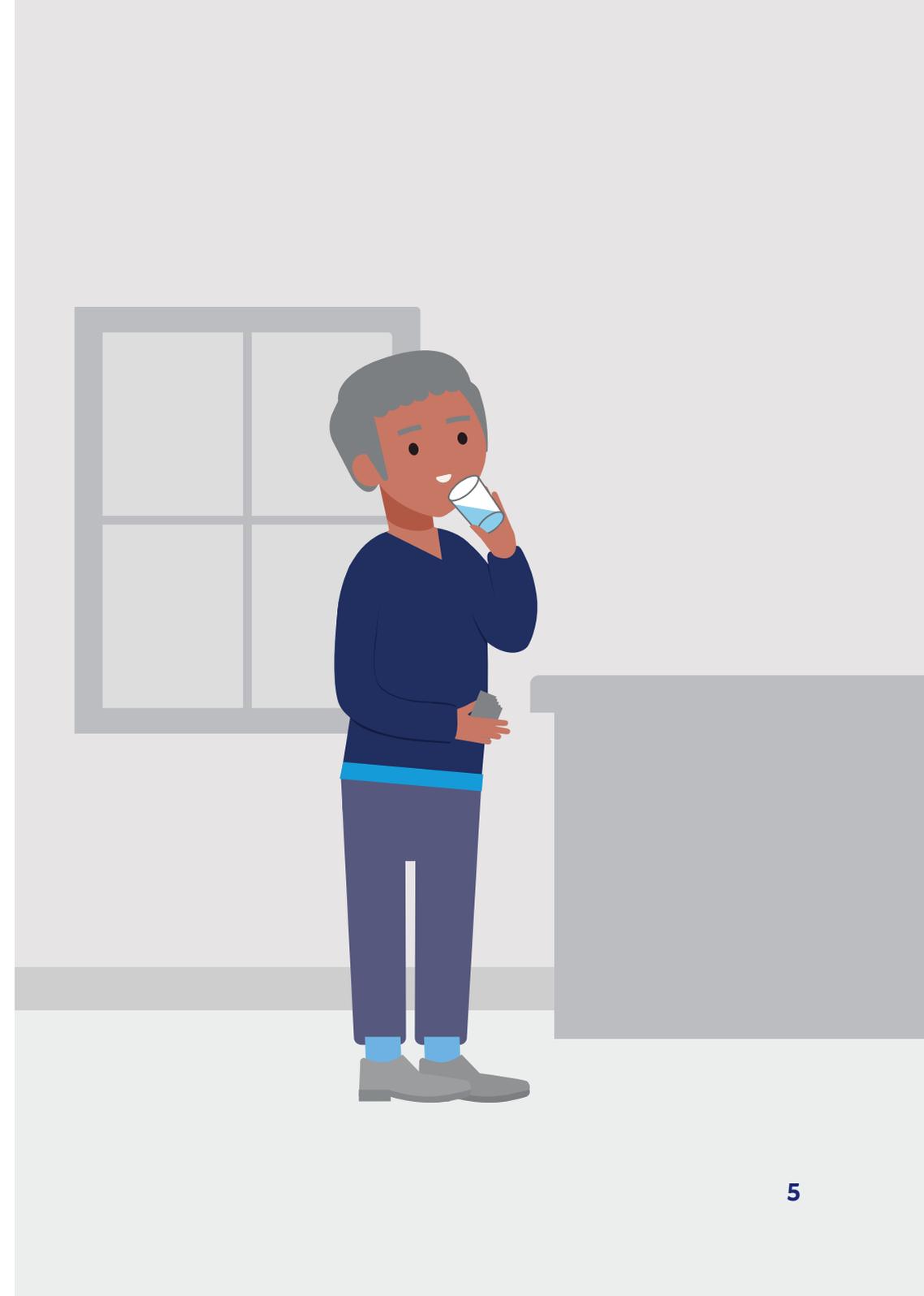
Speak to your doctor about the good things and bad things about having a colonoscopy.



What happens before a colonoscopy?

Your bowel needs to be empty for the doctor to get a clear picture of it with the camera. This is called 'bowel preparation'. These are the steps to empty your bowel before the test:

- In the days before the test you must go on a special diet. There are some things you cannot eat. Your doctor will give you more information about this.
- You get a packet of powdered medicine to help you go to the toilet to empty your bowel.
- Put the powder in water (follow the doctor's instructions) and drink it. The medicine makes you poo a lot.
- You will take some more medicine in the evening.
- You will have to go to the toilet lots of times to do more poos. Don't be surprised or scared.



It may be hard to get up and go to the toilet so many times.

You might be asked to take some of the medicine the morning of the test – you might have to get up very early to do this.

If you have a support person or carer, tell them that you are getting ready for a colonoscopy and need help using the toilet the day before the test.

You can ask to do these steps in the hospital if you cannot do them at home.



What happens during a colonoscopy?

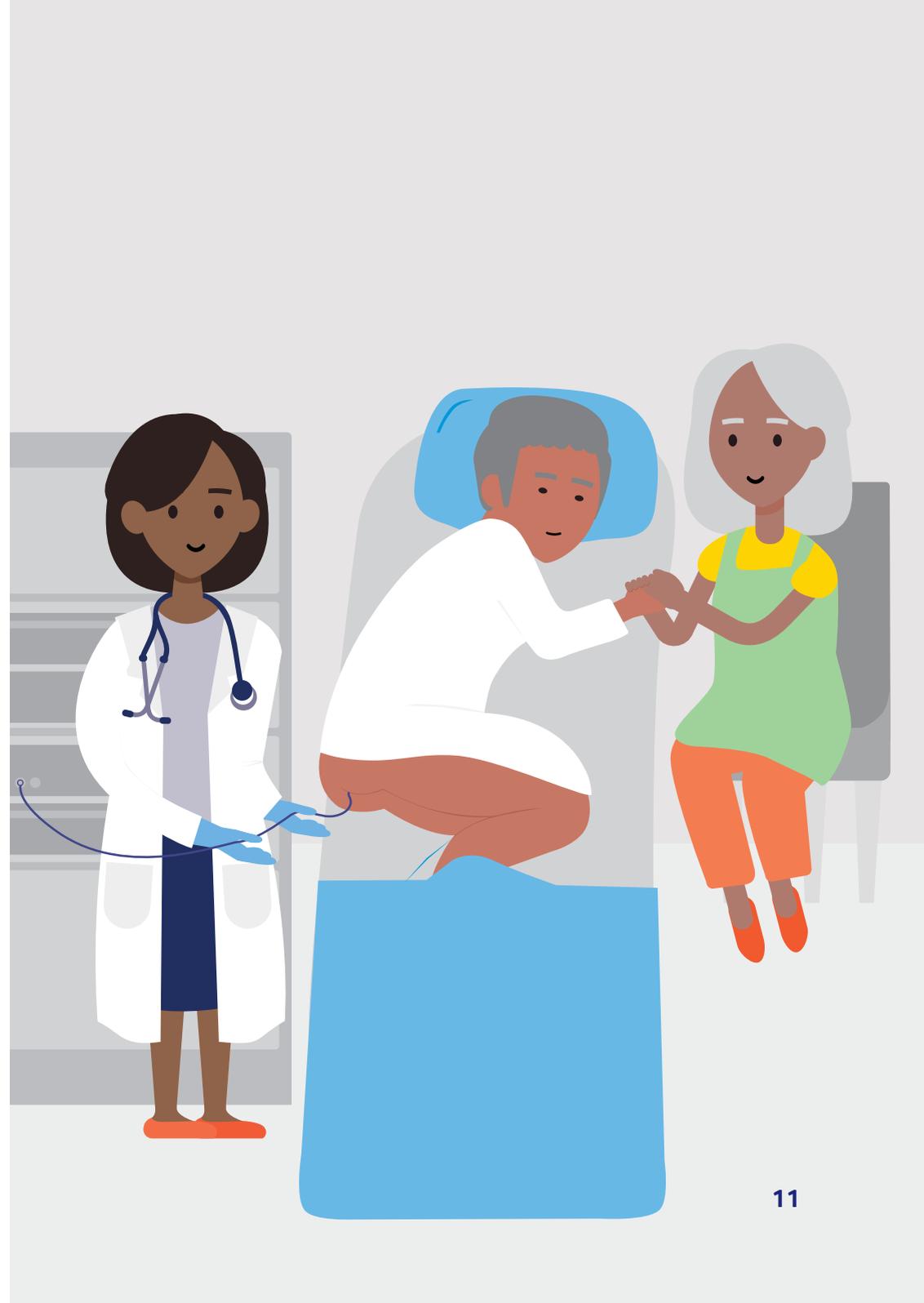
You will go to the hospital or health service for the colonoscopy.

You should bring a friend, carer, support worker or family member with you into the hospital or health service.



These are the steps to complete the colonoscopy:

- The nurse will give you a gown to wear.
- You will usually be given some medicine to make the test easier for you – most people are asleep or half-asleep.
- The doctor puts a tube up your bottom. There is a small camera at the end of the tube.
- The doctor can see what is inside your bowels on a television screen. The doctor is looking to see if there is anything wrong.
- If the doctor finds any lumps to take out, they can often do this straight away.
- You will have a rest in the hospital before going home.
- The doctor who did the test will tell you the results and send a report to your usual doctor.



If you don't have support at home you may need to stay at the hospital, or another care facility, that night.

You will not be allowed to leave the hospital on your own – an adult must go with you, such as a carer, a support worker or a family member.

What happens after a colonoscopy?

The medicine given to help you relax can make you feel sleepy and confused for a day after the test.

This can make it difficult for you to do many things including driving, taking public transport or caring for yourself.



- Have a carer, friend or family member bring you home and stay with you until you feel better.
- Do not drive, use machinery or drink alcohol until the next day, or follow your doctor's instructions.

You may notice traces of blood coming from your bottom.

A little bit of bleeding like this is ok and may last for a few days.

If there is a lot of blood, or the bleeding does not stop, call your doctor or go to the hospital emergency department straight away.

REMEMBER YOU CAN CHOOSE TO DO THE TEST OR NOT. THE TEST MAY NOT BE NICE, BUT IT COULD SAVE YOUR LIFE.



Word list:

Bowel: Your bowel is inside your body between your stomach and your bottom. It helps you absorb water from food and store poo until you use the toilet.

Colonoscopy: A special test used to find bowel cancer or other problems. This is done by putting a tiny camera on a long tube into your bottom to look closely at your bowel.

You can call Cancer Council Victoria on 13 11 20 to ask more questions or talk about the test.

Cancer Council Victoria would like to thank the members of the Self-Advocacy Resource Unit who helped in the development of this resource.