Artificial intelligence (AI) technologies to help detect or characterise colorectal polyps

Information for the public
Published: 19 March 2026

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Your healthcare professional may use artificial intelligence (AI) technologies to help detect or characterise colorectal polyps during your colonoscopy.

The NHS is collecting more evidence for these technologies. Some may be used only as part of a research study for people with diagnosed inflammatory bowel disease or Lynch syndrome. You might be asked if details of your treatment can be collected as evidence. You can ask your healthcare professional about how your information will be stored and used.

NICE has said that AI software to help characterise colorectal polyps can be used only as part of a research study.

About the technologies

Colonoscopy is used to find and remove polyps (small growths) in the bowel before they become cancerous.

AI technologies can act as a second observer to the endoscopist during colonoscopy by highlighting areas of concern. This could help detect polyps that the endoscopist might otherwise have missed. Early and accurate detection helps ensure that people get the right treatment as soon as possible.

Some of these AI technologies can also assess polyp features to help the endoscopist characterise the polyp and decide whether it is potentially cancerous without removing it for laboratory analysis. This could reduce unnecessary removal of polyps that are not likely to develop into cancer.

Is this diagnosis method right for me?

Your healthcare professionals should give you clear information, talk with you about your options and listen carefully to your views and concerns. Your family can be involved too, if you wish. See our webpage on making decisions about your care.

Questions to think about

- How well does it work compared with other methods of detecting or characterising polyps?
- How long will the test take?

Information and support

The NHS webpage on bowel polyps may be a good place to find out more.

Bowel Cancer UK (020 7940 1760) can give you advice and support.

You can also get support from your local Healthwatch.

NICE is not responsible for the quality or accuracy of any information or advice provided by these organisations.

ISBN: 978-1-4731-9289-8