

What do I need to know about my colonoscopy?

Is there a preparation?

Yes! Although preparations differ, *all* require you to be on a liquid diet for at least one full day prior to your examination. You will also need to pick up the medication listed on your preparation about one week prior to your procedure. If you do not prep, the colonoscopy cannot be done.

What about my medications?

1. Stop taking aspirin (except for baby aspirin), anti-arthritis medication, Ibuprofen or blood thinning drugs seven days before the day of your colonoscopy. Check with the prescribing doctor prior to stopping these drugs. **Notify us if you take Coumadin, Plavix or Aspirin by calling 317-841-8090 extension 229.** You may take Tylenol.
2. Do not take iron, herbal supplements or vitamin E seven days prior to the exam. You may continue taking multi-vitamins including those containing iron until the day of your procedure.
3. If you take more than 500 mg of vitamin C per day, you must continue to take the vitamin C every day, including the day of your colonoscopy.
4. Do not take any insulin or anti-diabetic medication on the morning of your colonoscopy. Notify the doctor that you have not taken any anti-diabetic drugs.
5. You may take heart, seizure or steroidal medications as usual. Continue Prednisone type medications as usual. Hold all other medications on the day of procedure.
6. If you normally take antibiotics for dentist appointments, please notify the doctor before your colonoscopy. You may need to be given antibiotics before your procedure.

What is a colonoscopy?

Colonoscopy is a state-of-the-art procedure that uses a video colonoscope to examine and visualize the entire large intestine or colon. The colonoscope is a long, flexible, fiber-optic tube that is about the thickness of a finger. The tube has a miniature television camera in its tip.

During the procedure, the colonoscope's video camera allows the doctor to examine the entire lower gastrointestinal tract via a television screen. Any suspicious or abnormal areas that are found are photographed, and tissue samples are taken for further study and examination. The doctor will also remove any polyps. The procedure usually takes less than 30 minutes, but if polyps must be removed, it can last longer.

Why a colonoscopy?

Colonoscopy can find the cause of such symptoms, as rectal bleeding or changes in bowel habits, that x-rays cannot. A barium enema xray examination shows only shadows and doesn't clearly show cancers and small lesions. Colonoscopy is also an important procedure for detecting colon cancer. Almost all colon cancers start as polyps (benign growths of the colon) that later become cancerous. Thanks to the colonoscope, most polyps and tumors can be removed early, safely and without surgery.



Preparing for a colonoscopy

To ensure that any and all abnormalities can be seen clearly during the procedure, the colon must be completely empty of waste material. Solid matter retained in the colon prolongs the colonoscopy and can reduce its effectiveness and decreases the diagnostic accuracy, making a repeat examination necessary. To avoid this, you will need to follow the pre-colonoscopy diet carefully and follow the preparation instructions. Diet is a very important part of the cleansing process. See medication precaution section as they relate to your medications. **If you are pregnant, please notify the nurses immediately.**

During the colonoscopy

You will be given a sedative medication intravenously that relaxes and makes you sleepy. While lying on your side, the colonoscope is inserted into the rectum and gently advanced along the colon. The colonoscope is then slowly withdrawn while the colon is again carefully examined. If there is discomfort, it is very mild. You will likely fall asleep during the examination and may not, because of the medication, even remember having the test done.

Recuperation

After the colonoscopy, expect to be kept in the recovery room a short time, until most of the effects of the medication have worn off. Because you may not remember all the details explained during or after the procedure, the doctor will relay the results of the colonoscopy to the person who accompanies you. If this is not agreeable, notify the doctor and nurses before the procedure begins.

Note: Due to the medication, you will not be able to drive home after a colonoscopy. An adult must accompany you to the medical facility and remain until discharged.

Please do not plan return to work on the day the colonoscopy is performed. Consider resting at home at least two hours because the medication may make you feel drowsy for the rest of the day. Resume taking your usual medications on their regular schedule unless otherwise instructed by the doctor. Your normal diet and activities also can be resumed unless otherwise instructed. If the doctor finds a polyp and removes it, you may be placed on a liquid diet for 12 hours and restricted from any heavy lifting for 24 hours. If a biopsy was taken during the colonoscopy, you should call the office for the results in one week.

Possible complications

Colonoscopies are safe and very low in risk. Most colonoscopies are free from complications and the benefits of colonoscopy greatly outweigh the risk. However, like any other effective diagnostic or therapeutic procedure, complications can occur. Possible complications are perforation of the colon and heavy bleeding. A perforation of the colon is a puncture to the bowel wall, but is quite rare. Persistent bleeding may require hospitalization and even surgery. If you develop abdominal pain that is not gas related or excessive rectal bleeding (more than a spoonful and recurrent) , the doctor should be contacted immediately.