



# Colonoscopy

A colonoscopy is an exam of the colon and large intestine, using a flexible lighted tube called a colonoscopy.

## When is it used?

A colonoscopy is used to prevent, and early detect cancer of the colon and the diagnosis of illness.

## Cancer of the colon

One of the top three causes of death in individuals over 50 years of age. The other causes are heart attack and stroke. The general risk of getting cancer of the colon is about 6%. It is more common in individuals 50 years of age and older. 90% of cancer of the colon occurs in individuals over 50 years of age. About 75% of those who are diagnosed with cancer have no familial relationship, with only 25% of colon cancer patients having a family history of colon cancer.

Life style factors to decrease your risk of colon cancer



**Diet:** Increase fiber and Decrease eating red meat



Appropriate alcohol consumption and stopping smoking



Weight loss



Physical activity

# TESTING FOR Cancer of the colon



- Stools for occult blood
- Sigmoidoscopy
- Colonoscopy

## Preparation

If you need a pain reliever before the procedure, use acetaminophen rather than aspirin, to decrease the chance of bleeding. Avoid ibuprofen and naproxen

If you take Coumadin, a blood thinner you will need to stop, but talk with your doctor.

Your written instructions from your doctor will require:

- No solid foods for 24-48 hours before the exam
- Clear liquids 12-24 hours before the exam
- A bowel preparation-using laxative and perhaps enemas
- Drink plenty of fluids during the bowel preparation to avoid dehydration.

## The test

It takes about 20 – 30 minutes to complete.

The test is usually done as an outpatient in a hospital setting or an approved non-hospital surgical center.

You will be asked to sign a consent form, so discuss any questions with your doctor.

You will lie on the table on your side with your knees drawn up to your stomach, and just before the exam starts you will be given some intravenous medications which help relax you.

The Doctor passes the scope through your anus and can look at your colon from the scope or images from the scope camera on a TV monitor.

The Doctor may take small samples of tissue for lab tests. Abnormal areas, polyps, or small tumors can be removed by the Doctor.



## What happens after?

- You will rest in the procedure room or patient room until you are alert enough to go home.
- You should plan to rest for several hours at home after the procedure.
- It is normal to have intestinal gas and mild cramps for a few hours after the exam.
- You will be instructed on how to follow up with the Doctor to obtain your results.

## Benefits

- Diagnosis of colon problems
- Prevention of colon cancers
- Removal of certain colon cancers

## Risks

- Pain and swelling in the lower abdomen.
- Damage to your colon, or perforation, from the procedure that may require surgery.
- Bleeding inside the colon that may require surgery.

Tip of the day:

Talking about our bowels is a bit like a Rodney Dangerfield event, a bit embarrassing.

**Get over it, this is your life.**

