

Colonoscopy

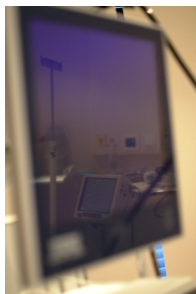
What is a colonoscopy

A colonoscopy is a procedure that uses a long, flexible tube, known as a colonoscope, with a camera attached to one end, to examine the insides of the colon. The colonoscope is passed through the rectum and the large intestine (colon) and the camera takes pictures which are projected onto a screen or monitor attached to it. Not only can abnormal tissue such as polyps be removed through the scope during the procedure but tissue samples (biopsies) can be taken as well.

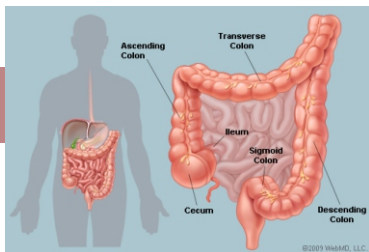
A screening colonoscopy is recommended for anyone fifty years of age and older or anyone with a parent, sibling or child with a history of colorectal cancer or polyps.

How to prepare for a colonoscopy

- Discuss any questions and concerns with your doctor prior to the procedure as knowing what to expect will help you to feel more calm and confident.
- Inform your doctor prior to the procedure if you regularly take aspirin, blood thinners, steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs or insulin.
- A clean colon will help the doctor to have a clear view and therefore make a confident and accurate diagnosis. For this reason your doctor will give you certain instructions a day or two before the procedure regarding the cleansing of your colon and you will be asked to refrain from eating solid food for 24 to 48 hours before the procedure.



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How is the procedure performed

While a colonoscopy is safe and painless the patient may feel some discomfort during the procedure. The doctor will administer general sedation via an intravenous line and patients will be asked to lie on their left side with their knees drawn up towards their abdomen. The thin, well lubricated colonoscope is then inserted into the anus and gently advanced through the colon. If necessary the doctor will use various instruments to take samples for biopsies or remove polyps.

What will happen after the procedure

Following the procedure the patient will be asked to rest for about an hour. If it is necessary for the patient to stay overnight a transfer will be arranged to an acute care facility. Occasionally air may have to be pumped through the colonoscope to help clear a path or open the colon which may cause some discomfort or pain for the patient after the procedure. The sedation may also make you feel drowsy so please arrange with a family member or friend to drive you home after the procedure. The patient may start eating normally following recovery from the anaesthesia. Doctor's instructions on medication and diet should be followed to recover optimal health as quickly as possible.

References: Mayo Clinic Health Information 2011. Colonoscopy [Online]. Available from: <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/colonoscopy/my00621> [Accessed 21 January 2013]

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