

## **What is a Colonoscopy?**

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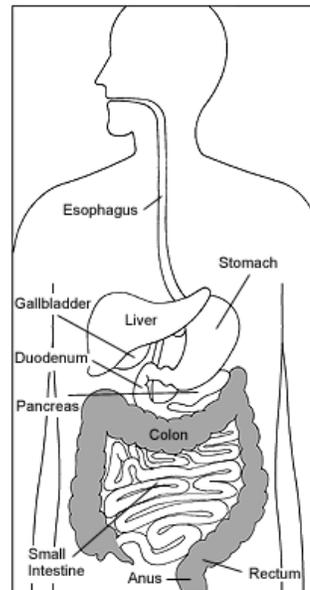
A colonoscopy is a procedure that allows your doctor to see the inside of your large intestine, or colon, from the lower part, called the rectum, all the way to the end of the small intestine. The purpose of a colonoscopy is to:

- Enable the doctor to see inflamed tissue, ulcers, and bleeding.
- Apply medications or heat directly to the lining of the colon.
- Remove polyps, or small abnormal growths in the lining of the colon.
- Screen and diagnose early signs of cancer

### **How do I prepare for the Colonoscopy?**

Your colon must be empty in order for the procedure to be completed successfully. You will be asked to follow a clear liquid diet the day before the procedure date. A clear liquid diet includes fluids you can see through such as tea without milk, broth, ginger-ale, Sprite, and water. You also may not be allowed to have anything to eat or drink after midnight the day of the procedure.

You will need to take a laxative prep the day prior to the colonoscopy. This often works within 30 minutes and will cause multiple bowel movements, so you will need to be close to toilet facilities once the prep is started.



*Source: National Digestive Diseases Clearinghouse @ <http://digestive.niddk.nih.gov>*

**If you are having the colonoscopy as an outpatient, you must arrange for a ride home, you will not be allowed to drive.**

### **Can I take my regular medications before the Colonoscopy?**

Consult with your doctor regarding the medications you are currently taking. Some medications, such as blood thinners (Coumadin, aspirin) anti-inflammatory drugs, and certain vitamins and herbals are usually stopped prior to the colonoscopy. Discuss with your doctor whether you need to stop these medications prior to your procedure date.

## **How is a Colonoscopy performed?**

- An intravenous line will be started in one of your arms.
- You will be asked to lie on your left side on an examining table.
- You will be given medication to relieve discomfort and a mild sedative to help you to relax during the procedure. *Notify your doctor prior to the procedure if you are allergic to any medications.*
- The doctor will insert a long, flexible, lighted tube, called a colonoscope, into your rectum and slowly guide it into your colon.
- The doctor will see images of your colon through this scope, which will allow him/her to carefully examine the lining for any abnormalities.
- A small amount of air will be used to inflate your colon to help the doctor to see the images better.
- If anything abnormal is seen in your colon, like a polyp or inflamed tissue, the doctor can remove all or part of it using small instruments passed through the scope.
- Samples of this removed tissue will be sent to the lab for testing.
- The procedure will take approximately 30 to 60 minutes.
- You will remain in either the endoscopy room or recovery room after the procedure for 30 to 60 minutes until the sedative wears off.

## **Are there any complications to be aware of?**

You may experience cramping and bloating for 24 hours after the procedure as a result of the air used to inflate the colon. Though uncommon, possible complications during the colonoscopy include bleeding and puncture of the colon.

## **What symptoms should I notify my doctor with after the Colonoscopy?**

Notify your doctor or nurse if you experience severe abdominal pain and/or temperature above 101 degrees. If you had biopsies taken or a polyp removed, you may pass a small amount of blood from your rectum. Notify your doctor or nurse immediately if you start to pass large amounts of blood or if blood passes continuously.

### *References:*

National Digestive Diseases Clearinghouse. Retrieved April 2007, from <http://digestive.niddk.nih.gov>

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