

Colonoscopy, Adult

A colonoscopy is a procedure to look at the entire large intestine. This procedure is done using a long, thin, flexible tube that has a camera on the end.

You may have a colonoscopy:

- As a part of normal colorectal screening.
- If you have certain symptoms, such as:
 - A low number of red blood cells in your blood (*anemia*).
 - Diarrhea that does not go away.
 - Pain in your abdomen.
 - Blood in your stool.

A colonoscopy can help screen for and diagnose medical problems, including:

- Tumors.
- Extra tissue that grows where mucus forms (*polyps*).
- Inflammation.
- Areas of bleeding.

Tell your health care provider about:

- Any allergies you have.
- All medicines you are taking, including vitamins, herbs, eye drops, creams, and over-the-counter medicines.
- Any problems you or family members have had with anesthetic medicines.
- Any blood disorders you have.
- Any surgeries you have had.
- Any medical conditions you have.
- Any problems you have had with having bowel movements.
- Whether you are pregnant or may be pregnant.

What are the risks?

Generally, this is a safe procedure. However, problems may occur, including:

- Bleeding.
- Damage to your intestine.
- Allergic reactions to medicines given during the procedure.
- Infection. This is rare.

What happens before the procedure?

Eating and drinking restrictions

Follow instructions from your health care provider about eating or drinking restrictions, which may include:

- A few days before the procedure:
 - Follow a low-fiber diet.
 - Avoid nuts, seeds, dried fruit, raw fruits, and vegetables.
- 1–3 days before the procedure:

- Eat only gelatin dessert or ice pops.
- Drink only clear liquids, such as water, clear juice, clear broth or bouillon, black coffee or tea, or clear soft drinks or sports drinks.
- Avoid liquids that contain red or purple dye.
- The day of the procedure:
 - **Do not** eat solid foods. You may continue to drink clear liquids until up to 2 hours before the procedure.
 - **Do not** eat or drink anything starting 2 hours before the procedure, or within the time period that your health care provider recommends.

Bowel prep

If you were prescribed a bowel prep to take by mouth (*orally*) to clean out your colon:

- Take it as told by your health care provider. Starting the day before your procedure, you will need to drink a large amount of liquid medicine. The liquid will cause you to have many bowel movements of loose stool until your stool becomes almost clear or light green.
- If your skin or the opening between the buttocks (*anus*) gets irritated from diarrhea, you may relieve the irritation using:
 - Wipes with medicine in them, such as adult wet wipes with aloe and vitamin E.
 - A product to soothe skin, such as petroleum jelly.
- If you vomit while drinking the bowel prep:
 - Take a break for up to 60 minutes.
 - Begin the bowel prep again.
 - Call your health care provider if you keep vomiting or you cannot take the bowel prep without vomiting.
- To clean out your colon, you may also be given:
 - Laxative medicines. These help you have a bowel movement.
 - Instructions for enema use. An enema is liquid medicine injected into your rectum.

Medicines

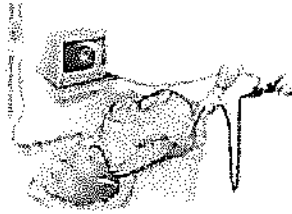
Ask your health care provider about:

- Changing or stopping your regular medicines or supplements. This is especially important if you are taking iron supplements, diabetes medicines, or blood thinners.
- Taking medicines such as aspirin and ibuprofen. These medicines can thin your blood. **Do not** take these medicines unless your health care provider tells you to take them.
- Taking over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, herbs, and supplements.

General instructions

- Ask your health care provider what steps will be taken to help prevent infection. These may include washing skin with a germ-killing soap.
- Plan to have someone take you home from the hospital or clinic.

What happens during the procedure?



- An IV will be inserted into one of your veins.
- You may be given one or more of the following:
 - A medicine to help you relax (*sedative*).
 - A medicine to numb the area (*local anesthetic*).
 - A medicine to make you fall asleep (*general anesthetic*). This is rarely needed.
- You will lie on your side with your knees bent.
- The tube will:
 - Have oil or gel put on it (be *lubricated*).
 - Be inserted into your anus.
 - Be gently eased through all parts of your large intestine.
- Air will be sent into your colon to keep it open. This may cause some pressure or cramping.
- Images will be taken with the camera and will appear on a screen.
- A small tissue sample may be removed to be looked at under a microscope (*biopsy*). The tissue may be sent to a lab for testing if any signs of problems are found.
- If small polyps are found, they may be removed and checked for cancer cells.
- When the procedure is finished, the tube will be removed.

The procedure may vary among health care providers and hospitals.

What happens after the procedure?

- Your blood pressure, heart rate, breathing rate, and blood oxygen level will be monitored until you leave the hospital or clinic.
- You may have a small amount of blood in your stool.
- You may pass gas and have mild cramping or bloating in your abdomen. This is caused by the air that was used to open your colon during the exam.
- **Do not** drive for 24 hours after the procedure.
- It is up to you to get the results of your procedure. Ask your health care provider, or the department that is doing the procedure, when your results will be ready.

Summary

- A colonoscopy is a procedure to look at the entire large intestine.
- Follow instructions from your health care provider about eating and drinking before the procedure.
- If you were prescribed an oral bowel prep to clean out your colon, take it as told by your health care provider.
- During the colonoscopy, a flexible tube with a camera on its end is inserted into the anus and then passed into the other parts of the large intestine.

This information is not intended to replace advice given to you by your health care provider. Make sure you discuss any questions you have with your healthcare provider.