



Colonoscopy

What is a colonoscopy?

A colonoscopy is an exam of the colon (large intestine, or bowel) with a slim, flexible lighted tube called a colonoscope. Your health care provider can use the colonoscope to get a clear, magnified view of the inside of your colon from the anus to the area near the appendix.

When is it used?

Colonoscopy is the most direct and complete way to see the entire lining of the colon. It is usually done for one of the following reasons:

- Prevention and early detection of cancer. If you are between 50 and 80 years old, your health provider may recommend that you have a colonoscopy every 10 years. If you have a personal or family history that increases your risk, your provider may recommend that you have the test more often. A colonoscopy can help your provider find and remove growths (polyps) before they become cancerous. It can also allow your provider to detect cancerous growths early, when the cancer is easier to cure.
- Diagnosis of illness. If you have symptoms of illness that your health care provider has not been able to explain, you may have this procedure to try to find the cause of your symptoms. For example, you may be having unexplained abdominal pain or abnormal bowel movements. Your provider can check for inflammation of the bowel lining or infected pockets (diverticula) in the bowel wall.

How do I prepare for a colonoscopy?

Dr. Waters' office will give you written instructions on how to clear bowel movements from the colon.

- You will probably be asked to eat no solid food for 24 to 48 hours before the exam.
- You should have only clear liquids 12 to 24 hours before your exam. Clear liquids are water, broth, apple or white grape juice, tea or coffee (no milk or cream), and soda. Gelatin in any color but red may also be eaten.
- You will be asked to take a liquid laxative. This will clear stool from the bowel. Be sure to complete this bowel preparation. The exam may not be possible if the colon still has stool in it.

Drink plenty of clear liquids during the bowel preparation to avoid dehydration. Unless otherwise instructed, you can continue taking your usual medicines.