

What are the possible complications of colonoscopy?

Colonoscopy is generally a very safe procedure. Because you are sedated during the exam, someone must drive you home. Even if you feel alert after the procedure, your judgment and reflexes could be slow for the rest of the day.

A very unusual complication is a tear through the bowel wall that could require surgery. Bleeding can occur at the site of a biopsy or polyp removal, but it is usually minor. Some patients might have a reaction to the medications used to relax and sedate you. Others may have a complication from pre-existing heart or lung disease. Call your doctor if you have abdominal pain, high fever or bleeding following a colonoscopy.



Colonoscopy Exams



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What is Colonoscopy?

Colonoscopy is a procedure for directly viewing and often treating problems of the lower digestive tract. Based on the results of this test, your doctor can determine the best course of action for treating or managing the cause of your problem.

Through the Colonoscope

Your doctor checks the lining of your colon by using a colonoscope. This instrument is a thin, flexible tube that is moved through your colon. The tube has several openings through which instruments can be passed. The colonoscope has a light source that beams light inside your colon. A computer chip at the tip of the colonoscope sends an image of your colon to a TV screen so the doctor can watch as the tube moves through your colon, showing an enlarged picture of the inside of your digestive tract.

Viewing Your problem

Colonoscopy can detect problems in their earliest, most treatable stages. Your colon and rectum normally have a smooth lining. If polyps or other growths are seen during your colonoscopy, they can often be removed then. Your doctor may take a biopsy (tissue sample) of a growth to study it further. Colonoscopy helps your doctor to diagnose abnormalities such as bleeding or inflammation, and to prescribe the best treatment for them.

Preparing for Colonoscopy

You will be instructed on how to prepare during the few days before your colonoscopy. You'll be asked to follow a special clear liquid diet and to take other steps like laxative or bowel cleanser use to ensure that your colon is empty and can be viewed clearly. You will need to arrange for someone to take you home following the exam because you will be given sedation medicine during the colonoscopy that make

you too drowsy to drive yourself safely. Do not arrange taxi service because they are not responsible for patients having sedation. You may not walk home after the exam. You should not drive, operate machinery or sign legal documents for 24 hours. Do not plan to return to work until the next day.

Tell your doctor if you know you are allergic to medications, take medications that thin your blood like aspirin, have heart or lung problems, or are being treated for other medical conditions.

During Colonoscopy

During your procedure, the lubricated colonoscope tube is inserted slowly and gently into the rectum. Air is used to expand your colon so that it can be clearly viewed. As a result you may feel some pressure and cramping. When the exam is over you will be taken to the recovery area.

After Colonoscopy

While recovering, you'll be monitored for one (1) hour until you are ready to go home. Within a few hours after you return home, you will be able to eat normally and resume some of your usual activities, unless otherwise directed. It is normal to experience some gas pains caused by the air used during colonoscopy. Walking helps relieve the bloated feeling. Instructions about when to return to your doctor for follow-up will be given to you before you go home.

Your Results

Your doctor will tell you the results of your colonoscopy either before you leave for home or within a few days after the procedure. If your problem was treated during the exam, your doctor may give you special instructions to follow. If a biopsy was performed, allow one week for the results. If necessary, further studies or treatments may be recommended.

Frequently Asked Questions About Colonoscopy

What preparations are required?

You will be instructed what to eat for several days before the exam and what colon cleansing routine to use. In general, the preparation consists of drinking a large amount of a special cleansing solution or clear liquids and special laxatives. Be sure to follow the instructions carefully. Some medications interfere with the preparation or exam. Tell your doctor about medications that you are taking, especially aspirin products, arthritis medications, blood thinners, insulin or iron products. Also be sure to tell them about allergies you have.

What happens during the actual procedure?

Your doctor will give you medicine through an intravenous (IV) line to relax and sedate you. You will lie on your side or back while your doctor slowly moves the small flexible tube of the colonoscope through your rectum and colon. The exam takes 15 to 60 minutes but you should plan on two to three hours for check-in, preparation and recovery.

What are polyps and why are they removed?

Polyps are abnormal growths in the lining of the colon that are usually not cancerous. Many are precancerous and could become cancer if not removed. Because cancer begins in polyps and your doctor can't tell a benign polyp from a cancerous one by its outer appearance, removing them is an important way of preventing colon cancer. Polyps are removed by burning or by removing them with wire loops called snares or with biopsy instruments. Removing polyps causes no pain. If polyps are removed, they will be tested for cancer.