

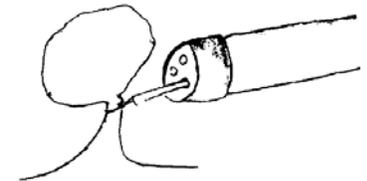
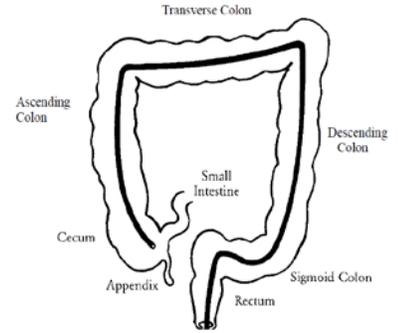
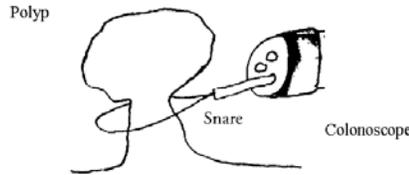
# COLONOSCOPY

## WHAT IS COLONOSCOPY?

Colonoscopy is an effective and safe means of examining the inside of the entire large intestine (colon) using a flexible fiberoptic instrument called a colonoscope. The colonoscope is about the diameter of your index finger and contains a fiberoptic light bundle through which light can be passed from an outside light source to illuminate the inside of the colon. The image of the colon lining is then transmitted to a video monitor. The colonoscope contains an instrument channel through which biopsy forceps and polyp snares can be passed in order to perform diagnostic and therapeutic procedures within the colon.

## WHAT IS POLYPECTOMY?

A wire snare or a special biopsy forceps is used to grasp a polyp. Electric current is passed through the instrument to coagulate the base of the polyp. The polyp is removed, retrieved and sent for pathologic examination. You do not feel the cautery. A small ulcer is left which heals completely. Occasionally, a polyp is too large to be removed with the colonoscope and must be removed surgically at a later time.



**WHY IS COLONOSCOPY NECESSARY?** Indications for colonoscopy include locating bleeding sites, studying bowel inflammation, removing polyps and biopsying suspected tumors and strictures of the colon. Periodic colonoscopy is important for patients with previous colon polyps, colon cancer, or a family history of colon cancer. Colonoscopy is also used for screening all individuals over the age of 50, looking for polyps or other neoplastic abnormalities.

**WHAT PREPARATION IS REQUIRED?** Proper colon preparation is very important. The colon must be clean in order to perform a safe and thorough examination. Follow the colon preparation instructions carefully.

**WHAT HAPPENS DURING THE PROCEDURE?** An intravenous line will be started in your arm before colonoscopy so that you can be given necessary medication to make you relaxed and sleepy. The examination is performed while you are lying on your side or back. The colonoscope is introduced into the rectum and gently advanced through the colon. The rectal area and the colonoscope are coated with a lubricating jelly. Movement of the endoscope may cause mild cramping. Air is put into the colon to gently distend it. This may cause a mild feeling of fullness. Do not be concerned if you feel you have the urge to have a bowel movement, as this is due to the air distending the colon. Your colon will be free of waste material as a result of the laxative preparation.

**ARE THERE ANY POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS?** Colonoscopy is safely performed on almost any patient regardless of age or other medical conditions. Complications have been very infrequent in large reported studies of diagnostic colonoscopies. However, a colon perforation could require surgery. Bleeding could require hospitalization, transfusion or surgery. These risks are slightly greater if a polyp is removed. Medication reactions and vein inflammation at the site of the intravenous line are unusual complications. There is a small risk of heart or lung problems or stroke due to the procedure or related to the sedative medications. Death is extremely rare, but remains a remote possibility. Be sure to tell us before the procedure if you have a history of drug reactions or allergies. Women should be certain to notify us if they think they might be pregnant.

**WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE COLONOSCOPY?** Colonoscopy usually takes 20-30 minutes. You will then be observed until you are alert enough to leave with a friend or relative who will take you home. We will discuss the results of the procedure with you before you go home, and you will be given instructions for post-colonoscopy care. You should not plan to drive or do anything important or potentially dangerous for the rest of the day. You will be able to eat lightly when you go home. We will contact you when biopsy results are available, generally in two to three days.

This information sheet is selective and does not cover all of the possible reasons, risks, alternatives and benefits of colonoscopy. It is intended as an introduction and is designed to cover the most commonly encountered concerns and questions. Your individual situation will be discussed with you. You are encouraged to ask any questions you might have regarding colonoscopy and colonoscopic polypectomy.

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