

What is a colonoscopy?

- A colonoscopy is an outpatient or inpatient procedure in which the inside of the large intestine (colon and rectum) is examined by the provider.
- A colonoscopy is commonly used to evaluate gastrointestinal symptoms such as rectal bleeding, intestinal bleeding, stomach pain, or changes in bowel habits.
- Colonoscopies are also performed in individuals without symptoms to check for polyps (growths) or cancer. This is called a screening colonoscopy, which is recommended for anyone 45 years of age and older, and for anyone with parents, siblings, or children with a history of colorectal cancer or polyps (growths). Regular colon testing is important because it can prevent cancer or find it early when it is easier to treat.

What happens before a colonoscopy?

- You will be given bowel preparation instructions and diet instructions from your provider in the mail.
- To have a successful colonoscopy, your body must be empty so that your provider can see. It is very important to read and follow all the bowel preparation instructions given to you by your provider. If your body is not empty, your colonoscopy will not be successful and may have to be cancelled.

How do I prepare for a colonoscopy?

- A preventive screening colonoscopy can turn into a diagnostic colonoscopy if the physician finds an area where sampling or treatment is needed. Therefore, it is essential to understand your insurance coverage before the procedure. The phone number is on the back of your insurance card.
- Arrange for a driver, and someone to be with you for the day. You will not be allowed to drive if you receive sedation.
- All jewelry should be left at home.
- Be sure to let your provider know if you are pregnant before the day of the colonoscopy.
- Some of the medicines you take may need to be stopped temporarily before your colonoscopy.
 - **Blood thinners**
 - such as Coumadin (warfarin), Ticlid (ticlopidine hydrochloride), Agrylin (anagrelide), Xarelto (Rivaroxaban), Pradaxa (Dabigatran), Pletal (Cilostazol), Brillinta (Ticagrelor), Eliquis (Apixaban), Effient (Prasugrel), and Plavix (Clopidogrel). You must speak with your prescribing provider or the specialist at least 2 weeks before the scheduled colonoscopy. Do not stop these medications without the consent of your provider.
 - **Insulin and diabetes medications**
 - Please call the provider that monitors your glucose levels. Your medications may need to be adjusted due to the diet restrictions required for a colonoscopy. Do not stop these medications without the consent of your provider.

What is a bowel preparation?

- A bowel preparation is required for a colonoscopy. Bowel preparation is the process to clean out the body so the provider can see.
- The bowel preparation can be unpleasant for many people and may discourage them from getting a colonoscopy.

- The preparation may include eating a special diet, drinking up to a gallon of a liquid laxative, and sometimes enemas to clean out the colon.
- Knowing what to expect can take away some of the fear and help you feel ready for your colonoscopy.

What to expect while taking the bowel preparation?

- You will probably be told to start the bowel preparation one day or two days before the colonoscopy.
- As soon as you start the bowel preparation, you'll need to stay near a bathroom.
- Results may vary. For some, the preparation may work quickly; for others, it may take a few hours before frequent bathroom visits are needed.
- Please be cautious when changing positions and your activity level during your bowel preparations. The preparation can cause dehydration. Common signs of dehydration are lightheadedness, dizziness, fatigue, and headaches. In some situations, it may be advised to have someone with you while you take your bowel preparation.
- This will likely mean canceling any plans for the day, including work. You may spend much of the night before the colonoscopy in the bathroom. Try to wear clothing that can be removed quickly. You will be going to the bathroom frequently.
- We suggest wiping with personal wipes instead of using regular toilet tissue. If you are using toilet tissue, select the softest kind.
- You can also use a warm washcloth to wipe the bottom instead of harsh paper. Some people find that lukewarm baths are helpful at soothing a sore bottom area. Just don't put anything in the water because some soaps can be irritating to a sore bottom area.

What should I expect during the colonoscopy?

- During a colonoscopy, you'll wear a gown but likely nothing else. You will be asked to lie on your left side during the procedure.
- You will be given medicine to make you comfortable and relaxed. In fact, most patients are asleep during the entire process and remember little or nothing about it.
- Once medicine takes effect, the scope is inserted into the rectum and moves around the bends of the colon. As the scope makes its way through the colon, the provider can see the colon on a T.V. The entire colonoscopy can take between 30 minutes to an hour.

What can I expect after the colonoscopy?

- You will need someone to drive you home. It is recommended that someone be at home with you after the colonoscopy. You should be able to resume normal activity and normal diet after the colonoscopy is done.
- Your provider will tell you what was found before discharge. Results of any tissue samples removed will be mailed to you in approximately two weeks.
- You will be observed for a minimum of 40 minutes with your blood pressure, pulse, and respirations checked every 10 minutes.
- Before you leave the Endoscopy Unit a nurse will review discharge instructions.
- Your family members or friends may join you in the observation area if you wish.
- If your provider found polyps (growths) or abnormal tissue in the colon they may recommend having a follow-up colonoscopy in as little as three months depending on the size and number of polyps (growths) found.
- You may feel bloated after because air is put in the body during the colonoscopy. Passing the air will help relieve the pressure.