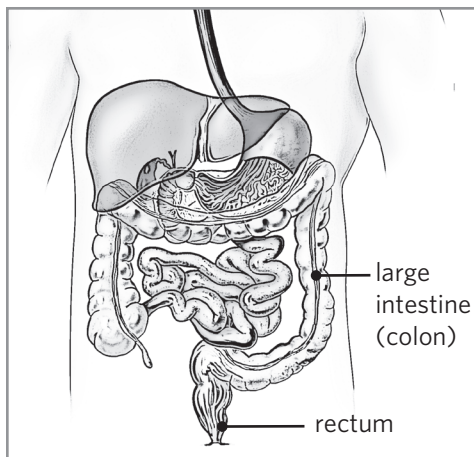


Colonoscopy



When you get a colonoscopy, your doctor checks your colon (large intestine) and rectum. It can be used as a screening tool for colon cancer, or it may be used to figure out what's causing bowel symptoms like blood in your stool, pain in your abdomen or diarrhea.

If you're 50 or over, you need a colonoscopy to check for colon cancer at least every 10 years. But if you have certain risk factors, your doctor may recommend you get tested more often or begin testing sooner.

Before Your Exam

You'll need to prep for your colonoscopy. Your doctor will give you specific instructions, including:

- **Stick to a special diet**—Only drink clear liquids, like broth and water, the day before your screening (no solid foods). Don't eat or drink anything after midnight.
- **Avoid red liquids**—Stay away from red-colored liquids like tomato and cranberry juices the day before. These can make it hard for your doctor to get a clear picture of your colon.
- **Empty your colon**—Your doctor will prescribe a bowel-cleansing pill or liquid for you to take the day before. Once you take it, you'll need to go to the bathroom often so make sure there's one close by. Some bowel cleansing preps can be harmful for people with diabetes or kidney disease so tell your doctor if you have either of these conditions.
- **Talk to your doctor about your medicines**—A week before your test, remind your doctor of any medicines you take. Your doctor may have you change your dosage or stop taking certain medicines until after your colonoscopy. But never stop taking any medicine unless your doctor tells you to.

Follow your doctor's instructions exactly when you're preparing for your colonoscopy. This will help you get the most accurate results from your screening.

During Your Exam

Your colonoscopy will take between 20–60 minutes. Before the test begins, you'll change into a hospital gown, and your doctor will give you medicine to help you relax. It will also make you feel drowsy.

During the test you'll lie on your side on an exam table. Your doctor will insert a long, thin, flexible tube with a tiny camera on the end, called a colonoscope, through your rectum and into your colon. The video camera on the end of the colonoscope will be connected to a computer screen so your doctor can see inside your colon.

You may have a little bloating or cramping during the test, but it shouldn't be painful. Colonoscopies are very safe, and complications are rare.

If your doctor finds anything unusual during your colonoscopy, he will take a small tissue sample for testing. This is called a biopsy. If you have polyps (small growths in your colon lining), your doctor may remove them during the colonoscopy and also send them for testing.



After Your Exam

You'll feel sleepy for a while after your exam, so have a friend or family member drive you home. Plan to stay home and take it easy the rest of the day.

You might feel bloated or gassy for a few hours, but this will go away. It's also normal to have a small amount of blood in your first bowel movement after a colonoscopy, but call your doctor if you:

- **continue to have bleeding with or without a bowel movement**
- **have a fever or chills**
- **have severe or ongoing stomach pain**

To learn more, visit:

- **American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy**

www.asge.org

- **National Digestive Diseases Information Clearinghouse**

www.digestive.niddk.nih.gov

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The Results

After the exam, your doctor will be able to tell you if you had a biopsy or if any polyps were removed for testing. But it usually takes a few days to get the results. Your doctor will probably call you or schedule an appointment to go over the results when they're ready.

Remember:

- Colonoscopies are an important screening for colon cancer.
- If you're 50 or over, you need a colonoscopy at least once every 10 years. Depending on your risk of colon cancer, you may need to have the test sooner or more often.
- Follow your doctor's instructions exactly when you're preparing for your colonoscopy.