

Colonoscopy

What is a colonoscopy?

A colonoscopy is an exam of your large intestine, also called the colon, with a thin, flexible, lighted tube and tiny camera. This scope is put through your rectum and into your large intestine.

When is it used?

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

- **Prevention and early detection of cancer.** A colonoscopy can help your provider find growths (polyps) that might become cancer. The growths can then be removed before they become cancer. It can also help find colon cancer early, when the cancer is easier to cure.

If you are 50 to 75 years old, your healthcare provider may recommend that you have a colonoscopy at least every 10 years. If you have a personal or family history that increases your risk, your provider may recommend that you start having the test at an earlier age and have the test more often. In some cases, the test may be recommended for people older than 75.

- **Diagnosis of illness.** If you have symptoms such as diarrhea, rectal bleeding, losing weight without trying to, intestinal problems or belly pain, you may have this test to try to find the cause of your symptoms.

How do I prepare for this procedure?

Your healthcare provider will talk about your choices for treatment and explain the procedure and any risks. You should understand what your healthcare provider is going to do and how long it will take you to recover. You have the right to make decisions about your healthcare and to give permission for any tests or procedures.

Ask your healthcare provider what instructions you need to follow before the procedure. Your instructions may include:

- Changes to how you take your medicines. Some medicines (like aspirin or blood thinners such as Coumadin) may increase your risk of bleeding during or after the procedure. Tell your healthcare provider about all medicines and supplements that you take.
- What you can eat and drink before the procedure
- Quitting smoking if you smoke
- Getting other tests or procedures
- Other steps to follow before the exam. For example, you will be given instructions for clearing bowel movements from your intestines. Be sure to complete the bowel preparation as instructed, including what types of food and drink you can have in the days leading up to the procedure. The exam may not

be done if your intestine still has bowel movement in it. Medicines used to prepare for this procedure will cause you to have several watery bowel movements until only clear movements occur. Stay close to the bathroom after you take the medicine. Talk to your pharmacist or healthcare provider about other symptoms you might have.

- Finding someone to give you a ride home after the procedure

Tell your healthcare provider if you have any food or medicine allergies. Also tell your provider about all medicines and supplements that you take.

Talk to your provider about what happens after the procedure, such as:

- Taking medicines to relieve pain, prevent infection, or treat other problems
- Avoiding some activities for a while
- Symptoms or problems to watch for and what to do if you have them
- When you can return to your normal activities
- When to come back for a checkup

What happens during this procedure?

This test may be done in the healthcare provider's office or an outpatient clinic.

Just before your exam, you may be given medicine called sedation to help you relax, but you may be awake during the exam.

You will lie on a table on your side with your knees bent and drawn up to your stomach. Your healthcare provider will pass the scope through your rectum and into your lower intestine and view the images of your intestines on a computer screen. Air will be pumped into your intestines so your provider can see as much of the area as possible.

If your provider sees anything abnormal during the exam, he or she may take small samples of tissue through the scope for lab tests. This is called a biopsy. Your provider may be able to remove polyps or small tumors through the scope.

What happens after this procedure?

After the exam, you may rest until you are awake and alert enough to be driven home. You should plan on resting for a few more hours after you get home. It is normal to have gas and mild cramps for a few hours after the exam. This will last until your body passes the extra air.

If polyps or other tissue is removed, you may see a small amount of blood in your bowel movements for a short time.

What are the risks of this procedure?

Every procedure or treatment has risks. Some possible risks of this procedure include:

- Problems with or side effects from sedation
- Infection or bleeding

- Damage to other organs

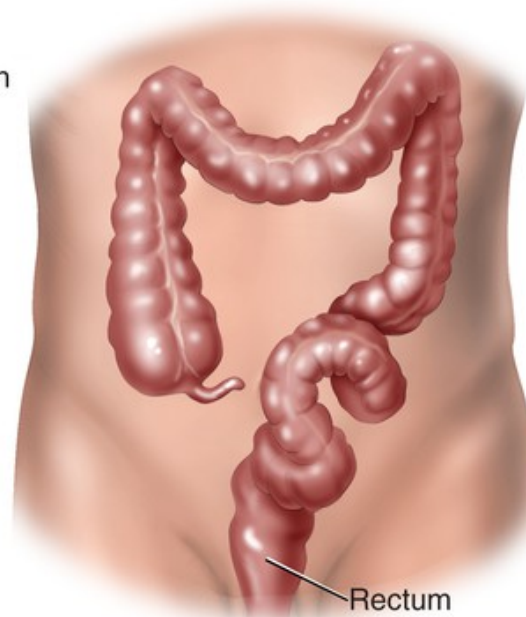
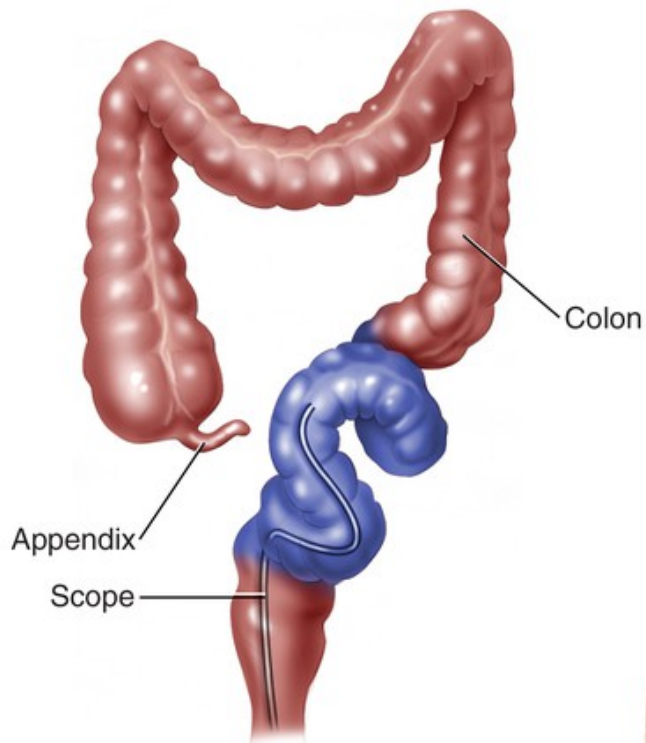
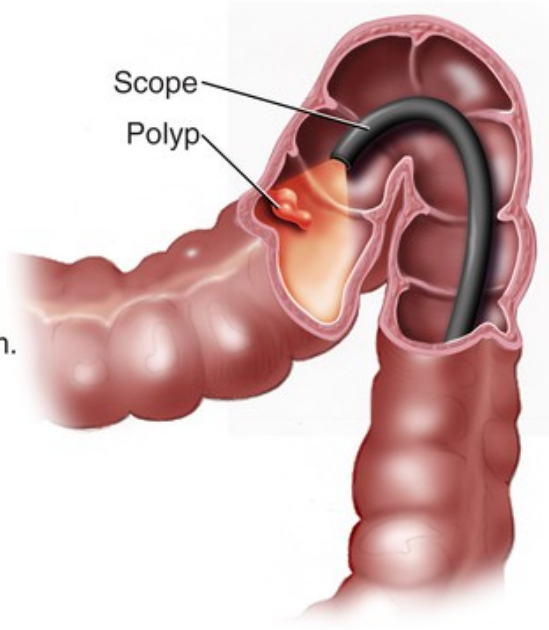
Ask your healthcare provider how the risks apply to you. Be sure to discuss any other questions or concerns that you may have.

Developed by RelayHealth.

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Colonoscopy and Sigmoidoscopy

The sigmoid colon is the last part of the colon (shown in blue). A sigmoidoscopy checks this part of the colon and the rectum. A colonoscopy checks all of the colon all the way to the appendix.



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