

Colonoscopy

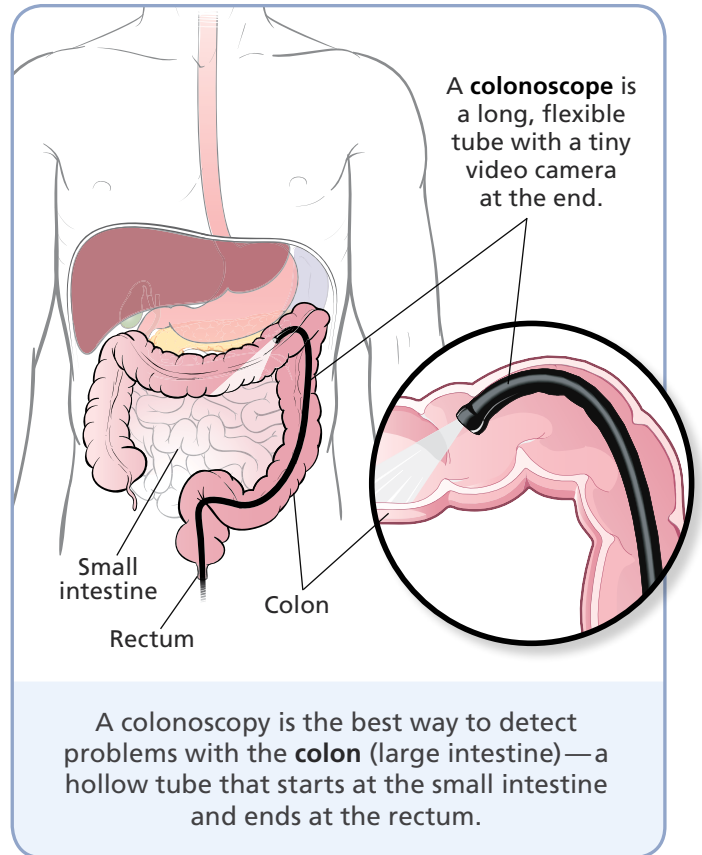
What is a colonoscopy?

Colonoscopy [koh-luh-NOS-kuh-pee] is a procedure to look at the inside of your colon and rectum. Your doctor inserts a **colonoscope** [koh-LON-uh-skohp], a long, flexible tube with a tiny video camera at the end. The camera sends images to a monitor, allowing your doctor to see a variety of problems.

Why do I need a colonoscopy?

Colonoscopy is the best test to screen for colon cancer, precancerous growths, and polyps. If an abnormal growth or polyp is found, the doctor can remove it, take a biopsy, or recommend surgical removal later. Finding and removing growths may prevent cancer from developing.

A colonoscopy also helps your doctor see other problems that may be causing abdominal pain, weight loss, or changes in bowel habits. This includes ulcers, narrowed areas, inflammation, or bleeding.



Potential benefits	Risks and potential complications	Alternatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colonoscopy is the best test for detecting precancerous polyps and cancer. • The doctor can often remove polyps, perform biopsies, and treat problems during the procedure itself. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bloating, gas, or cramping from air used to inflate the stomach and small intestine during the procedure • Small amounts of blood in your stool (poop) after removing polyps (if more blood, additional colonoscopy or surgery may be necessary) • Some undetected problems if the digestive system is not completely empty • A tear in the colon (very rare), which can cause infection, bleeding, or need for immediate repair surgery • Reaction to sedatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barium enema • Flexible sigmoidoscopy (only looks at the lower part of the bowel) • Stool tests (not as sensitive, often used for yearly annual screening) • X-rays, CT scan, and ultrasound

What do I need to do to prepare?

- **Give your doctor a list of all your medicines.** Be sure to include over-the-counter medicines (such as cold or allergy medicine), vitamin supplements, inhalers, liquid medicines, and patches.
- **If you are taking a blood-thinning medicine** (an anticoagulant), be sure your doctor knows about it. Contact your doctor or the people managing your blood thinner **at least a week before your colonoscopy.** Ask whether you should stop taking this medicine for a short time. Examples include warfarin (Coumadin), rivaroxaban (Xarelto), apixaban (Eliquis), and dabigatran (Pradaxa).
- **Follow your doctor's instructions for cleaning out your colon.** Your doctor will recommend a special diet that will empty and clean out your colon before the procedure. This can take 1 to 2 days. Plan to stay at home during this time, as you will need to use the toilet often. Cleaning out your colon is a very important part of the procedure.
- **Arrange for a responsible adult to drive you home** after your colonoscopy.



Questions for my doctor

What happens during?

The colonoscopy will last about 30 minutes. In most cases, you'll be given a sedative to help you relax and sleep. The sedative is given through an **intravenous line (IV)** inserted into a vein in your arm. Here's what will happen during the procedure:

- You'll lie on your left side while the doctor inserts the colonoscope into your rectum.
- A camera located at the tip of the colonoscope sends images to a monitor so the doctor can look closely at the inside lining of your colon. The scope puts air into your colon to inflate it and give the doctor a better view.
- Your doctor can also insert instruments through the colonoscope to remove polyps, take tissue samples, inject solutions, destroy abnormal tissue, or help widen openings.

Because of the sedative, you will likely not feel or remember anything about the procedure itself.

What happens after?

After it's over, you:

- Will stay at the facility until you partially recover from the sedative (about an hour). However, the sedative can take several hours (up to a full day) to wear off completely. **Someone else will need to drive you home, and you should plan to not drive the rest of the day.**
- May feel bloated or have gas for a few hours. You may also see a small amount of blood with your first stool.
- May discuss the results with your doctor after the exam or at a separate visit. Depending on what your doctor can see and the results, **you may need follow-up procedures. Talk with your doctor.**

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