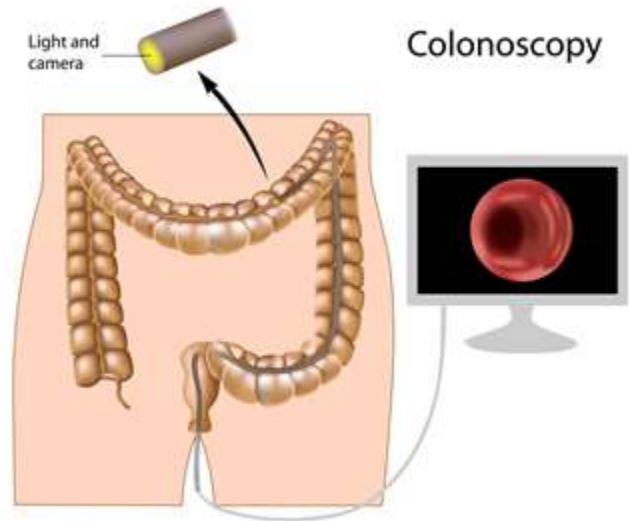


Colonoscopy

Colonoscopy is a procedure that lets your doctor look inside your entire large intestine. It uses an instrument called a colonoscope, or scope for short. Scopes have a tiny camera attached to a long, thin tube. The procedure lets your doctor see things such as inflamed tissue, abnormal growths, and ulcers.



Your doctor may recommend a colonoscopy for a number of reasons:

- To look for early signs of cancer in the colon and rectum
- To look for causes of unexplained changes in bowel habits
- To evaluate symptoms like abdominal pain, rectal bleeding, and weight loss
- Your doctor can also remove polyps from your colon during a colonoscopy

How is a colonoscopy performed?

Examination of the Colon

Patients typically receive an intravenous (IV) sedative prior to the procedure. Sedatives help patients stay relaxed and comfortable. While patients are sedated, the doctor and medical staff monitor vital signs.

During a colonoscopy, patients lie on their left side on an examination table. The doctor inserts a long, flexible, lighted tube called a colonoscope, or scope, into the anus and slowly guides it through the rectum and the entire colon. The scope inflates the colon with air to give the doctor a better view. A small camera mounted on the scope transmits a video image from inside the colon to a computer screen, allowing the doctor to carefully examine the tissues lining the colon and rectum. The doctor may ask the patient to move periodically so the scope can be adjusted for better viewing.

When the scope reaches the end of the colon, the scope is slowly withdrawn while the lining of the colon is carefully examined again.

Biopsy and Removal of Colon Polyps

The doctor can remove growths, called polyps, during colonoscopy using special tools passed through the scope. Polyps are common in adults and are usually harmless. However, most colon cancer begins as a polyp, so removing polyps early is an effective way to prevent cancer. If bleeding occurs, the doctor can usually stop it with an electrical probe, placement of a clip, or special medications passed through the scope.



During a colonoscopy, the doctor can also take samples from abnormal-looking tissues. Called a biopsy, this procedure allows the doctor to later look at the tissue with a microscope for signs of disease.

After The Procedure - Recovery

A colonoscopy takes about 30 to 45 minutes. Cramping or bloating may occur during the first hour after the procedure. Bleeding and puncture of the large intestine are possible but uncommon complications. Discharge instructions should be carefully read and followed. Patients who develop any of these rare side effects should contact their doctor immediately:

- 1) Severe abdominal pain
- 2) Fever
- 3) Bloody bowel movements
- 4) Dizziness
- 5) Weakness