

LET'S TALK COLONOSCOPIES

Why They Matter and Why You Shouldn't Be Shy

A lot of people avoid talking about colonoscopies because, well, they involve looking at your colon, which can feel a bit awkward. However, it's important because a colonoscopy can be a lifesaver; it's a vital tool for the early detection and prevention of colorectal cancer.

According to the American Cancer Society, colorectal cancer is the second most common cause of cancer deaths in the US when numbers for men and women are combined. It's expected to cause over 53,000 deaths this year alone. But the good news is that colonoscopies can help prevent this from happening.

What, exactly, is a Colonoscopy?

It's a screening procedure where a doctor uses a thin, flexible tube with a small camera attached to examine the inside of your rectum and colon. This allows him to identify any abnormalities, such as polyps, which are precancerous growths. If found, polyps can be removed during the procedure itself, preventing them from developing into cancer.

The entire procedure usually takes from 30-60 minutes. While you may choose no sedation, most patients receive moderate or deep sedation, which prevents them from feeling anything. Often, patients are asleep for the entire procedure.

When should you have your first colonoscopy?

It is recommended that people with average risk of colorectal cancer (no personal or family history of colorectal cancer) to begin screening at age 45. If your first colonoscopy shows no polyps, the recommendation is to repeat the procedure every 10 years.

If polyps are found, depending on the type, size, and number of polyps removed, the frequency of colonoscopy screenings may be from 3-10 years.

Generally, routine colonoscopies are not recommended after age 75 to 85, depending on your overall health. These are guidelines, and your doctor can assess your individual risk factors and medical history to create a personalized screening plan.

March is Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month. If you are 45 or older, take this Month as your opportunity to schedule a colonoscopy if you have never had one.

COLORECTAL CANCER: DON'T IGNORE THE SIGNS



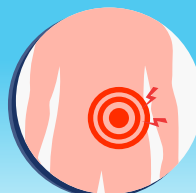
Bloody Stool



Fatigue



Weight Loss



Abdominal Pain



Bloated Stomach



Strategies that can help lower your risk of developing colon cancer



Avoid smoking and tobacco products

Smoking is a major risk factor for several cancers, including colon cancer.



Maintain a healthy weight

Obesity is a risk factor for several cancers, including colon cancer.



Limit alcohol consumption

Excessive alcohol consumption is linked to an increased risk of various cancers, including colon cancer.



Increase your fiber intake

Fiber from fruits, vegetables, and whole grains helps move waste through your colon reducing the time it takes for harmful substances to stay in contact with the colon lining.



Schedule colonoscopy screenings at appropriate times.



Limit red and processed meats

Studies show that excessive consumption of red meat and processed meats is linked to an increased risk of colon cancer. Choose leaner cuts and alternative protein sources like fish, poultry, or legumes.



Consider taking a calcium and vitamin D supplement

Research suggests that calcium and vitamin D supplements might offer some protection against colon cancer.



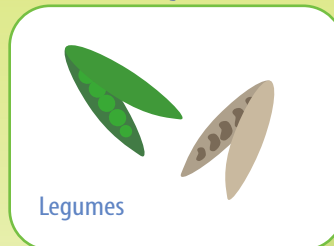
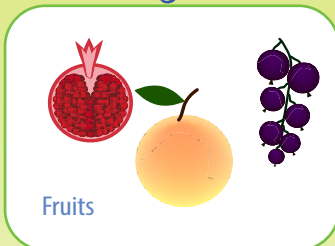
Engage in regular physical activity

Aim for at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise daily.

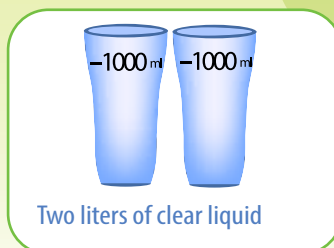
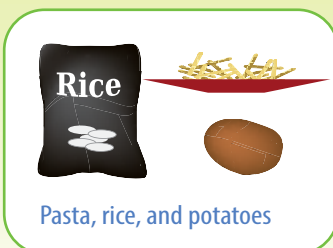
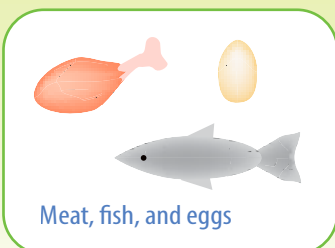
Preparing for a Colonoscopy

Preparing for a colonoscopy is relatively straightforward, and involves a brief dietary shift and drinking a bowel prep solution prior to your procedure. Your doctor will give you clear instructions, but usually, it means eating foods that are easier to digest for a few days prior. Below are some of the recommended types of foods to eat during this period, as well as some to avoid.

Stop eating these foods three days prior to your colonoscopy



Permitted foods



Sources: American Cancer Society (cancer.org)
Centers for Disease Control (cdc.gov)
Mayo Clinic (mayoclinic.org)