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Patient Education:

Colonoscopy, Adult

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A colonoscopy is an exam to look at the entire large intestine. During the exam, a lubricated, flexible tube that has a camera on the end of it is inserted into the anus and then passed into the rectum, colon, and other parts of the large intestine.

You may have a colonoscopy as a part of normal colorectal screening or if you have certain symptoms, such as:

- Lack of red blood cells (*anemia*).
- Diarrhea that does not go away.
- Abdominal pain.
- Blood in your stool (*feces*).

A colonoscopy can help screen for and diagnose medical problems, including:

- Tumors.
- Polyps.
- Inflammation.
- Areas of bleeding.

Tell a health care provider about:

- Any allergies you have.
- All medicines you are taking, including vitamins, herbs, eye drops, creams, and over-the-counter medicines.
- Any problems you or family members have had with anesthetic medicines.

- Any blood disorders you have.
- Any surgeries you have had.
- Any medical conditions you have.
- Any problems you have had passing stool.

What are the risks?

Generally, this is a safe procedure. However, problems may occur, including:

- Bleeding.
- A tear in the intestine.
- A reaction to medicines given during the exam.
- Infection (rare).

What happens before the procedure?

Eating and drinking restrictions

Follow instructions from your health care provider about eating and drinking, which may include:

- A few days before the procedure – follow a low-fiber diet. Avoid nuts, seeds, dried fruit, raw fruits, and vegetables.
- 1–3 days before the procedure – follow a clear liquid diet. Drink only clear liquids, such as clear broth or bouillon, black coffee or tea, clear juice, clear soft drinks or sports drinks, gelatin dessert, and popsicles. Avoid any liquids that contain red or purple dye.
- On the day of the procedure – **do not** eat or drink anything starting 2 hours before the procedure, or within the time period that your health care provider recommends. Up to 2 hours before the procedure, you may continue to drink clear liquids, such as water or clear fruit juice.

Bowel prep

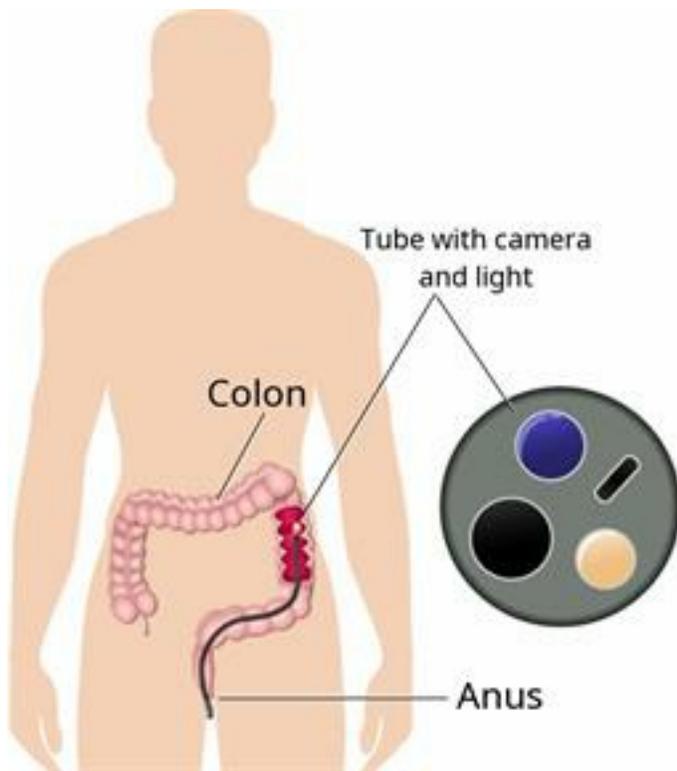
If you were prescribed an oral bowel prep to clean out your colon:

- Take it as told by your health care provider. Starting the day before your procedure, you will need to drink a large amount of medicated liquid. The liquid will cause you to have multiple loose stools until your stool is almost clear or light green.
- If your skin or anus gets irritated from diarrhea, you may use these to relieve the irritation:
 - Medicated wipes, such as adult wet wipes with aloe and vitamin E.
 - A skin-soothing product like petroleum jelly.
- If you vomit while drinking the bowel prep, take a break for up to 60 minutes and then begin the bowel prep again. If vomiting continues and you cannot take the bowel prep without vomiting, call your health care provider.
- To clean out your colon, you may also be given:
 - Laxative medicines.
 - Instructions about how to use an enema.

General instructions

- Ask your health care provider about:
 - Changing or stopping your regular medicines or supplements. This is especially important if you are taking iron supplements, diabetes medicines, or blood thinners.
 - Taking medicines such as aspirin and ibuprofen. These medicines can thin your blood. **Do not** take these medicines before the procedure if your health care provider tells you not to.
- Plan to have someone take you home from the hospital or clinic.

What happens during the procedure?



- An IV may be inserted into one of your veins.
- You will be given medicine to help you relax (*sedative*).
- To reduce your risk of infection:
 - Your health care team will wash or sanitize their hands.
 - Your anal area will be washed with soap.
- You will be asked to lie on your side with your knees bent.
- Your health care provider will lubricate a long, thin, flexible tube. The tube will have a camera and a light on the end.
- The tube will be inserted into your anus.
- The tube will be gently eased through your rectum and colon.
- Air will be delivered into your colon to keep it open. You may feel some pressure or cramping.

- The camera will be used to take images during the procedure.
- A small tissue sample may be removed to be examined under a microscope (*biopsy*).
- If small polyps are found, your health care provider may remove them and have them checked for cancer cells.
- When the exam is done, the tube will be removed.

The procedure may vary among health care providers and hospitals.

What happens after the procedure?

- Your blood pressure, heart rate, breathing rate, and blood oxygen level will be monitored until the medicines you were given have worn off.
- **Do not** drive for 24 hours after the exam.
- You may have a small amount of blood in your stool.
- You may pass gas and have mild abdominal cramping or bloating due to the air that was used to inflate your colon during the exam.
- It is up to you to get the results of your procedure. Ask your health care provider, or the department performing the procedure, when your results will be ready.

Summary

- A colonoscopy is an exam to look at the entire large intestine.
- During a colonoscopy, a lubricated, flexible tube with a camera on the end of it is inserted into the anus and then passed into the colon and other parts of the large intestine.
- Follow instructions from your health care provider about eating and drinking before the procedure.
- If you were prescribed an oral bowel prep to clean out your colon, take it as told by your

health care provider.

- After your procedure, your blood pressure, heart rate, breathing rate, and blood oxygen level will be monitored until the medicines you were given have worn off.

This information is not intended to replace advice given to you by your health care provider. Make sure you discuss any questions you have with your health care provider.