

Facts About: Colonoscopy

An important health test to detect colon cancer.



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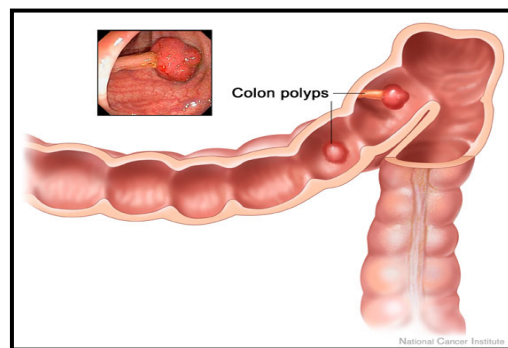
Cancer Prevention,
Education, Screening
and Treatment Program

About Colorectal Cancer

Colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of deaths due to cancer in the State of Maryland. Colonoscopy is an important health screening test that can help reduce the risk of colorectal cancer. If you are eligible, you should get screened. If your health insurance covers colonoscopy, contact your doctor.

About Colonoscopy

Colonoscopy (co-lon-os-co-py) is a test where a doctor uses a long, flexible tube with a light to look inside the large intestine (colon). Colonoscopy looks at the whole colon to find and remove *polyps* or to find cancer. *Adenomatous polyps* or *adenomas* are small growths that can turn into cancer. *Hyperplastic polyp* is a type of polyp that does NOT cause cancer.



Colonoscopy Can Also Find Other Health Problems

Other health problems that a colonoscopy can find are:

Inflammatory Bowel Disease: This includes Ulcerative Colitis and Crohn's Colitis. Inflammatory bowel disease DOES increase the risk of colorectal cancer.

Diverticuli: These are finger-like pouches from the wall of the colon that occur due to weak muscles. They do NOT increase the risk of colorectal cancer.

Hemorrhoids: Hemorrhoids are big veins in and around the *anus*. They can cause pain or bleeding. They do NOT increase the risk of colorectal cancer.



Who Should Get Colorectal Cancer Screening Tests

Those who should get colorectal cancer screening tests are:

- People ages 50 years and over. (Over 90% of colorectal cancer is found in this age group.)
- People under 50 years old with:
 - A personal family history of colorectal cancer or adenomas;
 - A personal history of inflammatory bowel disease (Ulcerative Colitis, Crohn's Colitis); or
 - Women who had cancer of the ovary or endometrium (womb).

How The Screening Test Is Done

Before a colonoscopy, the patient's colon must be clean so the doctor can see inside the entire colon. To do this, the patient is asked to take a laxative and/or go on a clear liquid diet one to two days before the test.

Just before the test, the patient is given medicines to help him/her relax. After the test, the patient is sent home, but will need someone to drive them home. Although the procedure is relatively safe, all medical procedures involve some risk.

For More Information

Additional colonoscopy and colorectal cancer information is available at:
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/colorectal/>