Colonoscopy

A colonoscopy is the recommended follow-up test to your abnormal home screening test result. A colonoscopy allows the doctor to examine the inside of your colon (bowel) and rectum. A long flexible tube (colonoscope) with a small camera is passed into your rectum and colon. On a video monitor, the doctor looks for any abnormal areas on the lining of your colon. Sometimes a small tissue sample will be taken. This is called a biopsy.

If polyps (small growths) are found, they can be removed using tiny tools passed through the colonoscope. The samples will be sent to a lab where they will be checked for any signs of cancer.

BENEFITS OF A COLONOSCOPY

A colonoscopy:
- is the most effective way to diagnose colon cancer, and
- can prevent colon cancer by finding and removing polyps before they turn into cancer.

RISKS OF A COLONOSCOPY

For most people, a colonoscopy is a safe and straightforward procedure. However, the following rare complications are possible:
- A tender lump or redness might occur where the intravenous (IV) is placed in your arm.
- Medications given may cause breathing or blood pressure problems, a rash, or fever.
- Bleeding may occur after biopsies or removal of a polyp. In rare cases you may need to receive blood or require surgery.
- A hole may occur in the colon. If this happens, you will be given antibiotics, IV fluids or may require surgery. In very rare cases, people have died.

There is also a small chance that a polyp or cancer may be missed depending on how well the colon can be seen. Discuss the risks and benefits with the doctor before you agree to have a colonoscopy. Visit GetCheckedManitoba.ca to watch a video of a colonoscopy.

BEFORE YOUR COLONOSCOPY

Bowel (colon) preparation:
- The preparation of the colon is the most important part of the procedure that you can control.
- Your colon must be empty so that the doctor can see the lining clearly.
- You will be told what bowel preparation medication (laxative) to take and what diet to follow. Follow these instructions carefully.
- Good preparation allows a quicker examination, better ability to find polyps, and can prevent the need for repeat colonoscopies.

Medication:
- Continue to take your usual medications including blood thinning medications / anticoagulants such as Aspirin, Plavix, warfarin, dabigatran, rivaroxban, etc. during your preparation for this test unless otherwise instructed. You can take your medication with sips of clear fluids.
- If you are a diabetic on insulin or oral diabetic medications, follow the exact instructions you will be given.
THE DAY OF YOUR COLONOSCOPY

Bring a friend or family member to take you home by car or taxi. You will receive sedatives during the colonoscopy and will not be allowed to drive home.

- Arrive at the facility 1 hour before your colonoscopy.
- Bring a list of all your medications.
- If you use a machine for sleep apnea (CPAP/BIPAP), bring this with you to the hospital.
- You may wear your dentures. However, you may be asked to remove them prior to your procedure.
- Don’t bring jewelry or valuables with you.
- Don’t wear nail polish.
- You will be asked:
  - for your Manitoba Health card and the name and number of an emergency contact.
  - to sign a consent form if you have not already done so.
  - to go to the endoscopy/day surgery department.
  - to put on a hospital gown.
  - questions about your general health and surgical history.

- The nurse will:
  - check your blood pressure, pulse, breathing and temperature.
  - start an IV in your hand or arm.
  - take you to the endoscopy room for the colonoscopy. Your escort will stay in the waiting room.

DURING YOUR COLONOSCOPY

- You will be given sedatives and pain medications through your IV.
- The doctor will gently pass a thin flexible tube (colonoscope) into your rectum through your anus.
- Your colon will be inflated with air so that the doctor can see it better.
- You may feel some pressure or a bloating sensation, but you should not feel much pain. If you are having pain, tell your doctor or nurse.
- If polyps are found, the doctor may remove them.
- Biopsies may be taken if any abnormal areas are found within your colon. The test will take approximately 20-30 minutes.

AFTER YOUR COLONOSCOPY

- You will be taken into the recovery room. A nurse will monitor your blood pressure, pulse, breathing and temperature.
- You will stay in this area for about 1 hour.
- Once you are able to drink fluids and you feel less drowsy, the nurse will remove your IV. You will be allowed to go home with your escort.
Get the contact number of the doctor who did the colonoscopy.

- You will be notified of your results. A letter will also be sent to your family doctor outlining the results and recommendations.
- Discuss with your family doctor if you need to be screened again or if you need further testing or treatment.

WHEN YOU GO HOME

- For the next 24 hours:
  - do not drive, take sedatives, drink alcohol, or use power tools.
  - do not sign legal papers or make other important decisions.
- You should have someone stay with you overnight if you live alone.

- Follow the instructions that you take home from the facility.
- You may feel bloated and have cramps from the air in your colon. This will eventually pass. Gradually increasing your activity level will help.
- You may pass small amounts of blood in your stool (1-2 teaspoons or 5-10 ml). This is more likely if you have a biopsy or a polyp removed.
- You may not have a bowel movement for 1 to 2 days. Follow the dietary instructions given to you. Eat your normal diet when you feel you can.

Call the doctor who performed the colonoscopy if you have concerns or if you experience:

- fever (38°C or greater) or chills.
- dull abdominal pain or discomfort that lasts more than a few hours after the procedure or is increasing.
- new abdominal pain.
- nausea or vomiting.
- persistent abdominal bloating.
- moderate amounts of blood in a bowel movement (more than 2-3 teaspoons or 10-15 ml).
- black stools.
- pain, redness or swelling of the IV site for more than 48 hours.

If your doctor cannot be reached, call Health Links-Info Santé at 204-788-8200 or 1-888-315-9257, or go to the nearest emergency department.

Go to the emergency department immediately, if you experience:

- sharp, steady or worsening abdominal pain.
- passing large amounts of blood or clots (1/2 cup or 125 ml).
- difficulty breathing.