



# COLONOSCOPY

## ***What is a Colonoscopy?***

A Colonoscopy is a test that lets your doctor look inside your large bowel (colon). The large bowel is the last portion of your digestive tract (tube that carries food and liquids from your mouth and through your body), ending at the rectum. The doctor will insert a narrow tube with a tiny camera on the end, starting at your rectum and traveling through your large bowel. The tiny camera allows the doctor to look at the inside of the bowel.

## ***Why should you have a colonoscopy?***

It is recommended that screening for colorectal cancer (cancer in the large bowel or rectum area) for people without risk factors begin at age 50. Your doctor may discuss this with you if you are 50 years old or older.

Other reasons are:

- If you have a change in bowel habit or bleeding. This could be a possible problem in the large bowel or rectum.
- To check on unexplained stomach symptoms.
- To check for colitis.
- To confirm findings of polyps (growths) or tumors found during a barium enema exam.
- To keep an eye on patients with a past history of colon (bowel) polyps or cancer.

## ***How is a colonoscopy performed?***

Your doctor will order a drug for you to take the day before the test, which will clean out your bowel. It may be either liquid or pills, but either one will work. It is important that the bowel be clean so that the doctor can see everything clearly. You will be given a drug to relax and keep you comfortable before the start of the test.

The doctor will put in a narrow tube with a tiny camera on the end, starting at your rectum and traveling slowly through your large bowel. This tube with camera allows your doctor to check the inside of your bowel, looking for anything that should not be there. If a polyp or growth is found, the doctor can take a tiny piece of it (or the whole polyp if not too big) and remove it for study. This is all done through the narrow tube that has the tiny camera on the end. The doctor may also add some air into the bowel through the narrow tube in order to open the bowel and see more clearly. The test usually takes 30 to 60 minutes.

After the test you may be a little uncomfortable. The discomfort quickly goes away as you get rid of any air that might have been added during the test.

## ***What are the benefits of a colonoscopy?***

By having a colonoscopy, doctors can find and remove most polyps without needing to do an operation. A colonoscopy is also better than an x-ray to find polyps or early cancer. In many cases the polyps can be taken out at the same time. This is a major step in preventing colon cancer.