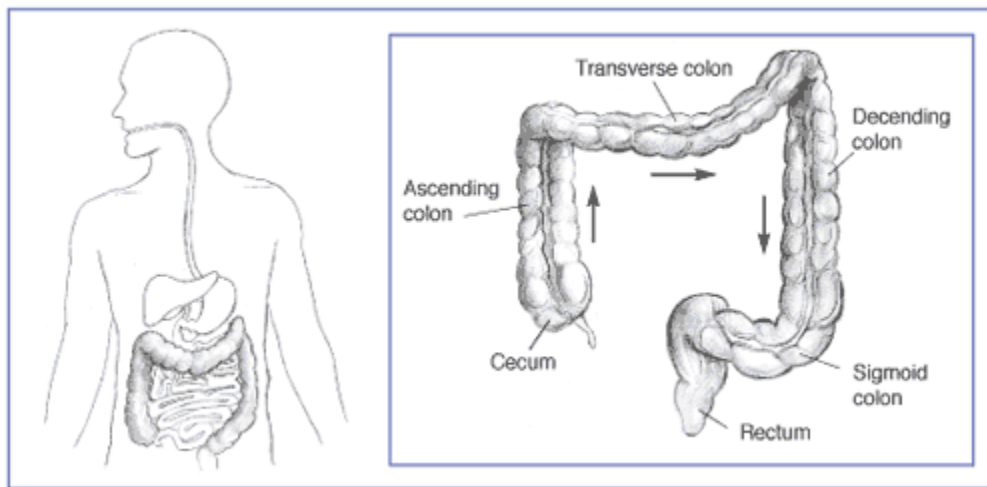


Center for Women's Gastrointestinal Services
Women & Infants Hospital
(401) 453-7953

What is a colonoscopy?

Colonoscopy allows the doctor to exam the lining of your colon (large intestine) for abnormalities. The doctor will insert a flexible tube (colonoscope) as thick as your finger into the anus and passed through your colon. The lining of the bowel is checked to see if there are any problems such as inflammation or polyps (growths). Sometimes it is helpful to take a biopsy- a sample of the lining of the bowel. This is done by passing a small instrument through the colonoscope to remove a tiny bit of the lining. The sample is sent to the laboratory for analysis. Using the same technique, the doctor can also remove polyps. This is painless.



Why should I have a colonoscopy?

Colonoscopies can reduce the chance of getting colon cancer. Colon cancer happens when colon polyps grow in the colon (like warts), and their cells change and become cancerous. Colon polyps can be removed during colonoscopy, preventing colon cancer.

Who should have a colonoscopy?

The American Cancer Society and the American College of Gastroenterology recommend that all adults have this screening test beginning at age 50. Your doctor may recommend that you have this test sooner if you are African American, have someone in your family with colon cancer or are having symptoms.

I've heard that colonoscopy is really awful. Is that true?

The biggest complaint about a colonoscopy is the preparation. Bowel prep is done to prepare the bowel for or a procedure. Its purpose is to clear out the bowel of all solid matter. Colonoscopy is not usually painful. You might feel pressure, bloating or cramping. During the test some air is passed through the endoscope and into the colon. This is to make the colon bigger and give the doctor a clearer view. Moderate sedation is given through a vein to make you relax, drowsy and comfortable. It won't put you to sleep. The procedure itself takes 30 to 60 minutes, although you should plan on two to three hours for waiting, preparation and recovery.

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Getting ready for the procedure

1. Please be sure that you have planned for a responsible adult to come into the Endoscopy suite to sign you out of the unit. You must have someone drive you or be available to drive you home the day of the procedure. You may take a taxi or bus, if you are accompanied by a responsible adult. You will not be able to drive the day of your procedure.
2. One to two weeks before your procedure please have the required blood work done (slip is enclosed). This may be done at any laboratory.
3. Please check with your insurance company before the procedure is done to confirm your coverage.
4. Bring a detailed list of your medications including over the counter medications and supplements. List the dose (ex: 10 mgs) and when you take it (ex: once a day at bedtime).
5. Follow the enclosed bowel preparation instructions carefully. Your lower bowel must be completely empty of waste material to allow the physician to have a clear view.
6. Patients having procedures at 100 Dudley Street, park in the lot located behind the building. Parking is free

What happens during the procedure?

In the procedure room, you will be asked to lie on your left side with your knees slightly bent. A nurse will be with you throughout the entire procedure. The physician will give you the medication through the intravenous line. You will be given oxygen through a nasal cannula, and a device will be placed on your finger to monitor oxygen levels. Electrodes will be placed on your chest to monitor your heart. Once the procedure has started there may be periods of discomfort as the tube (scope) goes around bends in the bowel. Usually these will ease once the bend has passed. If you are finding the procedure more uncomfortable than you would like, please let the nurse know, and you will be given additional sedative or analgesia. In order to make the procedure easier you may be asked to change position (for example on your back). When the procedure is finished, the scope is gently removed.

What happens after a colonoscopy?

After the colonoscopy is completed, you will be monitored in the recovery room. When you are alert and awake, you will be given a drink, and then can get dressed. You can then go home. This may be up to an hour following the procedure. Your physician will explain the results of the examination to you. You may have had a polyp removed during your test or have had biopsies taken. You will receive your results during a follow up visit in the next several weeks. You may have some cramping or bloating because of the air introduced into the colon during the procedure. This should disappear quickly when you pass gas.