

COLONOSCOPY AND ITS RISKS

Colonoscopy is a procedure in which a flexible lighted tube (a colonoscope) is passed through the anus into the intestinal tract. This procedure allows the physician to examine the inside of the large intestine (colon) for diseases. Small pieces of any abnormal bowel can be removed through the colonoscope (these are called biopsies) and be analyzed in the laboratory. Additionally, any abnormal growths, called polyps, can be removed from the colon during colonoscopy. Almost all cases of colon cancer arise from benign colon polyps.

Most patients will undergo their first colonoscopy between the age of 40 and 50, depending upon symptoms, family history and race. Colon cancer can be prevented more than 95% of the time, if pre-cancerous polyps are removed when they are small. Large polyps are more likely to become malignant (cancerous).

Colonoscopy is generally very safe. As with any medical procedure, there are some risks. Major complications occur in about 1 out of 1,000 colonoscopies, and include perforation (making a hole in the colon), pneumonia, and bleeding. These complications sometimes require an operation to treat them. The risk of dying is very low, less than 1 in 10,000. If a polyp is removed, the risk is slightly higher.

To minimize these risks, it is very important to **discontinue** any medications which thin the blood at least **5 days prior to your procedure**. Iron supplements should also be stopped. In addition to some prescription medications, many over the counter medicines and supplements, thin the blood. A partial list of some of the more common medications which should be stopped 5 days before colonoscopy are listed below:

All forms of aspirin	Vitamin E
All forms of naproxen	Fish Oil
All forms of ibuprofen	Lovaza
All arthritis medications	Gingko Biloba
Coumadin (warfarin)	CoQ10
Plavix (clopidogrel)	Pletal
Persantine (dipyridamole)	BC Powders
Trental (pentoxifylline)	Alka Seltzer
Lovenox	Baby aspirin

Tylenol (acetaminophen), Ultram (tramadol), and Celebrex are okay.

If you have questions regarding whether any of your medications need to be discontinued prior to colonoscopy, please contact the office at 214.360.9877.

If a large polyp is removed at colonoscopy, then you should NOT travel in an airplane for 10 days, and all blood thinners should be avoided for at least 10 days. This is to minimize the risk of bleeding after your procedure.