

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT COLONOSCOPY

How long does the procedure take?

Usually about 20 to 30 minutes, but can vary depending on several factors. (Including: the number of polyps found, whether or not the colon is twisty, presence of scar tissue in the abdomen from previous surgery, etc.)

Is the procedure painful?

You will be sedated before the exam begins so discomfort during the procedure will be minimal and you probably will not remember it. Sometimes patients experience some light cramping and a "gassy" feeling when taken to the recovery room. This is normal and temporary.

Will I be completely asleep during the procedure?

You may fall asleep during the procedure, but you will be easily roused. You will be breathing on your own without assistance. This is called "conscious sedation." This level of sedation is usually adequate to control discomfort.

What parts of the intestine are examined during the procedure?

Colonoscopy is designed and intended to examine only the colon. However, occasionally the end of the small intestine that connects to the colon may be examined.

Why do I need to discontinue vitamins, herbal medications and other nonprescription medications?

Some products may interfere with the sedatives given for the procedure. Other medications can increase the risk of bleeding complications because they may act like "blood thinners" similar to aspirin products.

If my procedure is scheduled for late morning or afternoon, can I eat or drink anything that day?

NO solid foods are allowed the day before or the day of your procedure. You may have clear liquids the day before and the day of your exam, up until 4 hours prior to your procedure. **Absolutely nothing to eat or drink 4 hours before your procedure.** This includes gum, mints, lozenges, and tobacco because this will stimulate the production of acids in your stomach. It is important to follow your prep instructions exactly. Failure to follow the instructions may result in rescheduling your procedure.

Will I be able to drive home?

NO! You will be given sedation for your procedure. Your driver must accompany you and wait for you in our office until your procedure is done and you are discharged. We ask that your driver remain in our office in the event there is an emergency or complication during your procedure.

Can I resume normal activity the day after the procedure?

YES. In almost all cases, patients can resume full, normal activity the day after the procedure.

What if there is a complication?

If a complication is encountered during or right after the procedure, appropriate measures are taken which may include transferring you to the hospital for observation. In rare cases, surgery may be required. (Your discharge instructions will advise you of what to do in the event that you experience problems once you have returned home.)

Can I travel the day after the procedure?

YES. Occasionally, however, patients will be asked to restrict travel for various reasons. (Most often this is requested if large polyp has been removed at the time of your procedure.)

When will I get the results of my test?

You will be given written and verbal results of your test immediately after the procedure has been completed. If biopsies are taken or if polyps are removed, it may take **up to 14 days** for the pathologist to process and examine the tissue and send the results to your doctor. You will then be given the results through the patient access link, by phone, in writing or at the time of your next visit depending on your personal circumstances. (Please do not call for results before 14 days has passed.)

Where will the results of my test be sent?

A report will be sent to your referring physician or health care professional. If any tissue was taken at the time of the procedure, the results will be also forwarded. If you would like other physicians or health care professionals to receive copies of any reports, please let your doctor know at the time of the procedure.

Will I need a follow-up office visit after the procedure?

This depends on several factors including: reason for performing the procedure, findings, age, personal medical history, family history, and other risk factors for colon cancer. Your doctor will discuss your specific recommendations with you.

Is the procedure covered by my insurance plan?

In almost all cases, colonoscopy is covered by insurance plans and Medicare in the state of Virginia. (This usually includes screening procedures as well.) The amount of co-payment will depend on your individual insurance plan. Precertification is done by our scheduling department. If there is a problem, you will be notified well in advance of your procedure in most cases.

Why can't I have the "video capsule" or "virtual colonoscopy" to examine my colon?

The current "gold standard" for examining the colon is a colonoscopy. The video capsule only examines the small intestine. The virtual colonoscopy and other "body scans" have not yet been shown to be reliable (and require the same prep beforehand). Also, polyps cannot be removed during these types of exams. If polyps are detected, a standard colonoscopy would need to be scheduled to remove them and you would need to do the prep again.

Where can I get more information about colonoscopy and colon cancer screening?

- www.gastro.org
- www.acg.gi.org
- www.acge.org
- www.ccsr.org
- www.ccalliance.org