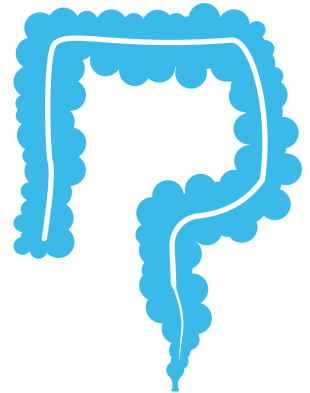


# What is a Colonoscopy?

A colonoscopy is a common painless procedure where your healthcare provider—usually a gastroenterologist—uses a camera called a colonoscope to look inside your rectum and entire colon. One of the things your healthcare provider will be looking for are small growths called polyps. If not removed, polyps may become cancerous.



90%  
of polyps can  
be found  
by a  
colonoscopy

Colonoscopy is widely considered to be the gold standard for colorectal cancer screening. Other tests can be used to check for colon cancer, but they aren't as effective as a colonoscopy at finding polyps, and may also need to be done more often.

## When should I get a Colonoscopy?

In most cases, you only need to get a colonoscopy once every 10 years, starting at age 45, unless you have a family history of colon cancer, changes in bowel habits or other factors or conditions that would increase your risk of colon cancer. Your healthcare provider will let you know how often you should get one. Colonoscopy is important for your health because it prevents and detects colon cancer and other gastrointestinal (GI) issues. Colon cancer is the third most common cancer and the second leading cause of cancer death in the United States. **The good news is, if colon cancer is found early and treated, the 5-year survival rate is about 90%.**

# The American Cancer Society recommends regular colon cancer screenings for everyone aged 45-75 years.

Talk to your healthcare provider about having a colonoscopy if you're 45 years of age or older, or have any of the following:

- A family history of colon cancer
- Change in bowel habits
- Blood in your stool
- Pain in your stomach area (abdomen)
- Lynch Syndrome
- Any chronic digestive condition such as Inflammatory Bowel Disease (Crohn's Disease or Ulcerative Colitis)
- Unexplained weight loss

## What should I expect?

### Before your Colonoscopy

- Having a clean colon is critical to a successful colonoscopy. This will allow your healthcare provider to have the best view and remove any polyps that may be found. Without a clear view, these abnormalities can be missed and could lead to colon cancer over time.
- You will need to complete a bowel prep. A bowel prep is a medicine that you drink to help clean out your colon.
- Be sure to follow your healthcare provider's instructions for how to take the prep.

### During your Colonoscopy

- You'll be given a mild sedative before the start of the procedure. This will make sure you stay asleep for the duration of the procedure and will not feel any discomfort.
- A small, flexible tube with a camera will be used to look for polyps (small growths) and anything abnormal inside your rectum or colon.
- If something is found, it can be removed and tested to make sure it isn't harmful.

### After your Colonoscopy

- Be sure to arrange for a ride home because you may feel sleepy from the sedative.
- You may also experience some gas and bloating, it tends to pass in a few hours and is normal.

