

# COLONOSCOPY AND POLYPECTOMY

- ◆ Your doctor has decided, after careful medical assessment, that a colonoscopy is necessary for further evaluation and treatment of your condition. It is a valuable tool for the diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up of many diseases of the large intestine. Abnormalities suspected by x-ray can be confirmed and studied in detail. Even when x-rays are negative, the cause of symptoms such as rectal bleeding or change in bowel habits may be found.
- ◆ Colonoscopy's greatest impact is probably in its contribution to the control of colon cancer in by polyp removal. Before colonoscopy became available, major abdominal surgery was often necessary to remove colon polyps to determine if they were benign (noncancerous) or malignant (cancerous). Now, most polyps can be removed easily and safely without surgery.

## WHAT IS A COLONOSCOPY?

- ◆ A colonoscopy is an examination of the colon using a colonoscope.
- ◆ A colonoscope is a long flexible tube that is about the thickness of a finger. It is inserted through the rectum into the large intestine (colon) and allows your doctor to carefully examine the lining of the colon.
- ◆ If your doctor sees a suspicious area or needs to evaluate an area of inflammation in greater detail, he can pass an instrument through the colonoscope and take a small piece of tissue (biopsy) for examination in the laboratory. Biopsies are taken for many reasons and do not necessarily mean that cancer is suspected.

## **WHAT IS A POLYPECTOMY?**

- ◆ A polypectomy is a procedure used to remove a polyp(s).
- ◆ During the course of the procedure, a polyp may be found. Polyps are abnormal growths of tissue which vary in size from a tiny dot to several inches. If polyps are detected, these will be removed by passing a wire loop (snare) through the colonoscope and severing the attachment of the polyp from the intestinal wall by means of an electric current (cautery). You will not feel any pain during removal of the polyp.
- ◆ Polyps should always be removed because they could cause rectal bleeding or contain cancer.
- ◆ Although the majority of polyps are benign a small percentage may contain an area of cancer. Colon cancer is a leading form of cancer in the United States.

## WHAT PREPARATION IS REQUIRED

- For the best possible examination, the colon must be clean And completely empty. The usual preparation includes.
- Clear liquids all day the day before the procedure.
- A preparation kit or a prescription for the kit will be provided by Your doctor.
- Discontinue the use of iron tablets for one week before the procedure.
- If you are having the colonoscopy as an outpatient, someone must accompany you to the endoscopy unit for the procedure since you will be given medication to help you relax. After the procedure you will be drowsy, so you will need someone to take you home. You will not be allowed to drive for 24 hours after the procedure. Even though you may not feel tired your judgement and reflexes may not be normal.
- It is important for your doctor to know if you had any barium x-rays in the past week, as barium may interfere with this procedure. Please bring your x-rays with you

## BEFORE THE PROCEDURE?

- A registered nurse (RN) will be with you during the entire procedure. She will explain the procedure to you and ask for a brief medical history. Be sure to let her know if you are

allergic to any medications, or are pregnant. You will be asked to sign a written consent form. This is the time for you to express your concerns or ask any questions. You can expect to spend approximately 2-4 hours in the Endoscopy Unit on the day of your exam.

- ◆ In the procedure room you will be lying down on an examination table, in a private room. The nurse will check your blood pressure, a cardiac monitor will be applied to watch your heart beat, and a finger clip will be placed on your finger to monitor your oxygen level. An intravenous solution (IV) will be started into your vein.
- ◆ Most patients are nervous and apprehensive about a colonoscopy, sedative medications (such as Demerol and Versed) are given through your IV to help you relax. These also may make you feel a little lightheaded and sleepy.

## **DURING THE PROCEDURE**

- ◆ The procedure is conducted with you lying on your left side in a partially darkened room. Your doctor will apply lubricant around the anus and pass the colonoscope into your rectum and gradually advance the scope through the entire colon while examining the lining thoroughly. It is necessary for your doctor to use some air to aid him in the exam. This may cause you to feel distended and full. If you have the urge to pass this air by rectum, you may do so, unless the doctor requests otherwise. The colon is quite twisted and tortuous. As the scope passes around some of the turns, it may cause a cramping or tugging sensation. This usually is relieved as the scope is straightened. The procedure may take anywhere from 10-30 minutes; if polyps are removed it may take longer.
- ◆ In rare cases, passage of the colonoscope through the entire colon cannot be achieved. A limited examination may be sufficient if the area of suspected abnormalities was well visualized.

## AFTER THE PROCEDURE

- ◆ After the procedure is completed, the scope is removed and you will be carefully observed for an hour or so, until the effects of the sedative medications have subsided. You may feel bloated and pass some gas after the procedure.
- ◆ After this recovery period, if you are an outpatient, you will be allowed to return home with your escort. Your doctor will explain the results of your exam prior to your discharge.

## ARE THERE ANY COMPLICATIONS?

- ◆ Colonoscopy and polypectomy procedures are safe and associated with very low risk. They are performed by doctors who have been specially trained. Complications can occur but are uncommon.
- ◆ One possible complication is a tear through the wall of the bowel (perforation) which may allow leakage of intestinal fluids. This may require hospitalization for observation and rarely surgery may be needed.
- ◆ Bleeding may occur from the site of biopsy or polyp removal. It is unusually minor and stops on its own or can be controlled by cauterization (application of electrical current) through the colonoscope. Very rarely, transfusions or surgery may be required.
- ◆ You may have localized irritation of the vein at the IV site where medication was injected. Other very rare risks include medication reactions and complications from unrelated diseases such as heart attack or stroke.

## DISCHARGE INSTRUCTIONS

- ◆ **Do not** drive or operate any motorized equipment for 24 hours.
- ◆ No alcoholic beverages for 24 hours.
- ◆ Medication side effects may include the following: blurred vision, difficulty with urination, dizziness and slower reaction time.
- ◆ If you have severe symptoms of the above or develop a cough, pain, fever, or rectal bleeding, you should immediately contact the doctor who did the procedure.
- ◆ Resume your normal diet and normal activity.

## EXAMPLES OF CLEAR LIQUIDS

- Broth – chicken, beef, or vegetable
- Jello – plain (no red or purple dyes)
- Fruit juices – no orange juice or purple or red dyes
- Coffee – (without creamer but Vanilla Boost does work!)
- Tea
- Soft drinks – (no red or purple dyes)
- Popsicles – (no red or purple dyes)
- Boost – (up to 6 cans) day **before procedure only**  
**Chocolate and vanilla only!**  
**NO BOOST PLUS!**

**NO RED DYES OR DAIRY PRODUCTS ON THE**  
**DAY BEFORE YOUR COLONOSCOPY!**