



# Colon Polypectomy

## What Is A Polypectomy?

Polyps are abnormal growths that involve the lining of the colon and grow into the inside (or the tube) of the colon or rectum. While the majority of polyps are benign, certain types have the potential to become cancerous. Because of this, these growths are removed during a routine screening colonoscopy using a technique called polypectomy.

A polypectomy is an important tool that doctors have for preventing colorectal cancer, the second leading cause of cancer deaths in the US, by removing polyps before they can become cancerous.

## Why Do I Need A Polypectomy?

While most polyps are not cancerous, removing polyps leads to a sizeable reduction in your chances of getting colorectal cancer in the future. Fortunately, most polyps that are removed during a routine colonoscopy are benign and categorized as either hyperplastic or adenomatous polyps. Hyperplastic polyps have no chance of becoming a cancer but adenomatous polyps, which are the more common type, can become cancerous, especially if they are large. However, the risk that a polyp will become a cancer is small, less than 1%.

Cancer containing polyps are also found but these are less common than the non-cancerous polyps.

Because your doctor can not tell which type of polyp you have at the time of your colonoscopy, all polyps are removed and sent to the laboratory to be tested.

## How Is A Polypectomy Performed?

A polypectomy is performed during a colonoscopy, which is a procedure that allows your doctor to inspect the lining of your

rectum and colon. If a polyp is found during your colonoscopy, your doctor can remove it during the procedure. Most of the time, polyps are removed using a snare, biopsy forceps, and/or by burning the base of the polyp with an electric current. This process is usually pretty quick and painless.

## How Do I Prepare For A Polypectomy?

Your colon must be completely cleaned out before you have a colonoscopy. This gives your doctor the best chance of finding any polyps that you may have in your colon. To clean your colon, your doctor will give you a laxative regimen to take at home before your test, along with specific instructions to follow about how to take it. The laxative will cause significant watery diarrhea, so you will need to remain close to a bathroom after you take it.

Also, it is common for your doctor to ask you to limit your diet to clear liquids (water, clear juice, clear broth, etc.) the day before your test. You will then need to stop drinking anything 6 to 8 hours before your procedure, unless your doctor instructs you otherwise.

While most medications are safe to take before your test, you may be asked to stop taking certain medications. In order for your doctor to decide if any of your medications need to be stopped, it is essential that you let them know all of the medications you are taking, including supplements and herbal remedies.

You won't be able to drive yourself home after the colonoscopy, so it is important that you have someone go with you to the outpatient center or hospital.

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## What Can I Expect During A Polypectomy?

Before your colonoscopy, your doctor will review your medical history and all of the medications you are taking. The procedure will be explained to you and you will be asked to sign a consent form allowing your doctor to perform the colonoscopy. If you have any questions about the test now is the time to ask them.

You will also have an IV started that allows your doctor to give you light sedation and medication to prevent pain. If your procedure is expected to be long or complex, you may have an anesthesiologist give you heavy sedation.

When you are taken into the procedure room, you will be asked to lie on your side with your knees pulled up to your abdomen. Once your doctor starts the test, you are likely to be asleep and you won't feel anything. If you do notice anything, you may feel like you need to have a bowel movement when the scope is put in. You may also notice some cramping.

If you have a polypectomy during the colonoscopy, you aren't likely to notice anything in particular when your doctor removes the polyp.

## What Can I Expect Immediately Following A Polypectomy?

After your colonoscopy and polypectomy, you will be monitored in the recovery area until your sedation wears off. You are likely to feel tired and have problems concentrating for the rest of the day. Because of this, it is recommended that you go home and rest until you feel back to your normal self.

You may feel a bit bloated or have crampy gas pains that are relieved by passing gas but this should go away pretty quickly. You may also notice traces of blood in your stool for a few days.

You should be able to eat shortly after the procedure is finished, but your doctor may limit your diet and activities for a few days, depending on how the procedure went.

When you are sent home, you will be given a list of instructions on how to care for yourself after the procedure. It is important to follow these instructions.

## How Long Will It Take To Get The Results Of The Polypectomy?

The polyp will be sent to the laboratory and studied under a microscope. It can take a few days before the results of your

biopsy are available. Once your doctor has a chance to review the results, they may call you to discuss the results or ask you to schedule an appointment to discuss what needs to be done next.

## What Are The Risks Of A Polypectomy?

A colonoscopy and polypectomy are safe procedures and serious complications are rare. Complications that can occur are infection or bleeding. Rarely, a small hole or tear in the rectum or colon can occur that requires immediate surgery to repair. Some people may have a reaction to a medication used during the procedure.

You should call your doctor right away if you experience any of the following:

- Severe abdominal pain
- Fever greater than 100.4 F
- Rectal bleeding
- Vomiting

## Where Can You Get More Information About A Polypectomy?

- **American Society of Colon and Rectal Surgeons**  
<https://www.fascrs.org/patients/disease-condition/polyps-colon-and-rectum>
- **National Library of Medicine**  
<https://medlineplus.gov/colonicpolyps.html>
- **National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases**  
<https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/digestive-diseases/colon-polyps>
- **American College of Gastroenterology**  
<http://patients.gi.org/topics/colon-polyps/>