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### **Answers to Questions about Colonoscopy and Polypectomy**

Your doctor has decided, after careful medical assessment, that a COLONOSCOPY is necessary for further evaluation, diagnosis and treatment of your condition.

This information sheet has been prepared to help you understand the procedure.

Please read it thoroughly.

#### **What is a Colonoscopy?**

A colonoscope is a long, thin, flexible tube that, using the mechanics of fiber-optics, allows your doctor to see the lining of your entire large bowel (colon). The colonoscope is introduced through the rectum or colostomy. Abnormalities suspected by your history or x-rays can be confirmed and studied in detail.

#### **What is Polypectomy?**

During the course of your colonoscopy, a polyp may be found. Polyps are abnormal growths of tissue which vary in size from a tiny dot to several centimetres. Depending on the size, shape and location of the polyp, your doctor may feel that removal is indicated. A snare (wire loop) is passed through the colonoscope and around the polyp. An electrical current will then be passed which will cut the polyp off and coagulate the removal site to prevent bleeding. You will be grounded to prevent an electrical shock or burn. You should feel no pain during polyp removal. Polyps are usually removed because they can be the source of rectal bleeding or may contain cancer. Although the majority of polyps are benign (non cancerous), some may contain a small area of cancer or may develop into cancer if left untouched. Removal of polyps is therefore an important means of prevention and cure of cancer of the large bowel (colon).

#### **What preparation is required?**

For the best possible examination, the bowel must be completely empty of waste material (stool). To ensure this, you will be asked to follow a special diet and take laxatives. Your doctor will give you detailed instructions outlining his/her preference for your bowel cleansing routine. **You must follow your doctor's instructions to ensure a complete examination.** Be sure to advise your doctor if you are allergic to any drugs.

If you are taking prescribed medications, you will be allowed to take them during your preparation days and on the day of your procedure. **You will be given specific instructions about blood thinner medications.** Once you arrive in the Endoscopy Unit you may be given medication to make you sleepy and relaxed, because of this you should not drive for 24 hours. Even though you may not feel tired, your judgment and reflexes will not be normal. Therefore, you are required to bring along a companion to do the driving or make prior arrangements for transportation home following your procedure.

#### **What to expect?**

- The Admitting Department will give you directions to the Endoscopy Unit.
- Once there, you will be required to sign a consent form for the procedure and a hospital release form (in the case of a minor, have a parent or guardian available to sign).
- A nurse will take a short medical history.
- You will change into hospital clothing.
- Your vital signs will be taken (blood pressure, pulse and temperature).
- If your doctor orders, you will be given enemas to complete your bowel cleansing.
- An intravenous may be started.
- You will be asked to remove your eyeglasses, contact lenses and dentures.
- You will empty your bladder.

- You may be given an injection, if ordered by your doctor, to make you relaxed and sleepy.
- A nurse or doctor will take you, on a stretcher, to the procedure room.

### **In the colonoscopy room:**

- You will lie on your left side during the examination.
- You may be given an injection into a vein or through your intravenous to make you relaxed and sleepy.
- The colonoscope will be introduced through your rectum or colostomy and your large bowel will be examined both on the way in and out.

On rare instances, a complete examination of the bowel may not be achieved; however, a limited examination may be sufficient if the suspected area was well visualized. The procedure is usually well tolerated and rarely causes pain. Many patients even fall asleep during the procedure and have little recollection of the event. For this reason, you will be given instructions for follow-up when you are ready to be discharged home.

### **After the colonoscopy**

When the procedure is completed, you will rest until most of the effects of the medication have worn off.

- Your intravenous will be removed.
- Because air is introduced into the bowel for better visualization, you may feel crampy and bloated for a few hours. Once you expel this air you will feel more comfortable.
- You will be able to resume your normal diet unless otherwise instructed.

If you have had a polyp removed, you will be asked to take a soft, low roughage diet for 2-3 days to allow proper healing at the site of removal.

When your nurse has decided you are sufficiently recovered, you will be given instructions for follow-up and discharged home in the company of your driver. Approximate recovery time is 2 hours.

### **Complications – Are there any?**

Colonoscopy and Polypectomy are safe and associated with very low risks.

The procedure is performed by specially trained doctors who are assisted by specially trained staff. Occasionally, a resident in training will perform the procedure under strict supervision of your doctor. Complications can occur but are very rare. One possible complication is a perforation or tear in the lining of the bowel. This may be managed with antibiotics and intravenous fluids or surgery may be required. Bleeding may occur from the site of the biopsy or polyp removal. This is usually minimal and stops on its own or can be controlled by cauterization through the colonoscope. Rarely, transfusions or surgery may be required. Irritation of a vein can occur at an injection or intravenous site. A tender lump or bruise may develop and last from several days to months. It eventually goes away with no ill effects. Other risks include drug reactions or complications from unrelated disease. Your doctor and the hospital staff are well informed, alert and totally equipped and prepared to handle any complications that might occur.

### **Is colonoscopy really necessary?**

Colonoscopy is a very valuable tool for diagnosis and treatment of many diseases of the large bowel. It is also a very effective screening mechanism in the early detections of cancer.

Abnormalities missed on x-ray may be detected, and those suspected by x-ray may be confirmed. Polyp removal through the colonoscope has greatly decreased the incidence of bowel cancer and the need for major abdominal surgery. Repeat colonoscopy for patients with previous polyps or cancer assures early detection should these conditions recur.

The decision to perform this procedure was based upon assessment of your particular problem. If you have any questions about your need for colonoscopy, or your ability to tolerate the preparation or procedure, please do not hesitate to speak with your doctor who will be happy to discuss your concerns.

Both of you share a common goal – YOUR GOOD HEALTH - and it can only be achieved through mutual trust, respect, understanding and co-operation.