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Research Recruitment and Minority Outreach (RRMO)
Herbert Irving Comprehensive Cancer Center
Columbia University

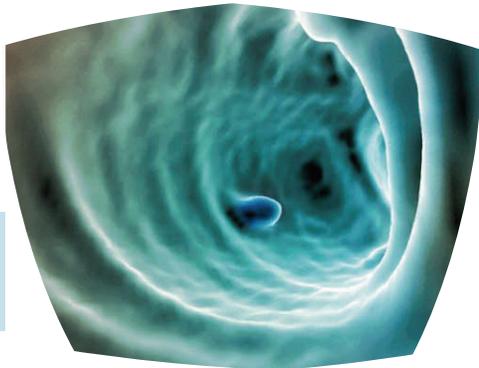
Hand in Hand

Since 2002

If you are 50 years old, it may be time to have your first colonoscopy

Colonoscopy seems to be the new test that everyone is talking about these days. We hear celebrities talking about it on the TV and, if you are 50 years old, your doctor has probably told you to have one. Despite all the buzz about colonoscopy, many do not understand what the test is for, why it is so important to have this test, and how the test is done.

How does the doctor find polyps or colorectal cancer with the colonoscopy?



Colonoscopy can prevent colorectal cancer

Colorectal cancer is cancer of the colon (also called the large intestine or the bowels) and the rectum. More than 150,000 adults in America will be diagnosed with colorectal cancer this year. That means that one person in twenty will develop this cancer in their lifetime.

Like other cancers, colorectal cancer takes years and years to develop. This cancer is different, however, in that it begins as a benign (non-cancerous) growth in the colon. Because these growths, called polyps, do not cause pain, you may not even know you have them. If a polyp is found on colonoscopy, it can be removed and colorectal cancer will never develop.

You will be given medicine to make you sleepy and the test is done while you are asleep. Most people do not remember having procedure when it is over.

The gastroenterologist (doctor who specializes in diseases of the stomach and intestines) inserts a thin tube with a camera and light on the end into the rectum. He/she guides the tube inside your body up through the length of your

colon, which is about 5 feet long. The camera sends pictures of your colon to a TV screen that the doctor monitors during the procedure looking for polyps or signs of cancer. Every inch of the inside of your colon will be viewed.

Doctors agree that most adults should be checked for colorectal cancer regularly beginning at 50 years of age. If the colonoscopy is negative, the test is usually repeated in 5-10 years.

If you, a friend, or a relative would like more information, please call Maxine Ashby-Thompson at 212-342-0028.



HOW CAN WE HELP YOU?

Colonoscopy patient navigation

Colonoscopy patient navigation is a new approach to providing assistance to patients to help them complete a colonoscopy in New York City.

Navigators are specially trained, culturally sensitive health care workers who help patients referred for colonoscopy by explaining what a colonoscopy is, why it is important, and how to prepare for it. They also answer all kinds of questions, and help patients overcome any fears by explaining exactly what to expect before, during and after the procedure.

Navigators can link patients to resources and other services and schedule appointments.

Your doctor can refer you directly to one of many hospitals and doctor's offices throughout NYC that provide colonoscopy patient navigation. In fact, The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and the Citywide Colon Cancer Control Coalition (C5) encourage the use of direct referrals for screening colonoscopy because it eliminates the pre-procedure gastroenterologist consultation for medically eligible patients.

For more information about direct referral to colonoscopy and patient navigation, go to <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/cdp/cdp-directreferral.shtml>



GETTING READY FOR YOUR COLONOSCOPY

A FEW DAYS BEFORE YOUR EXAM

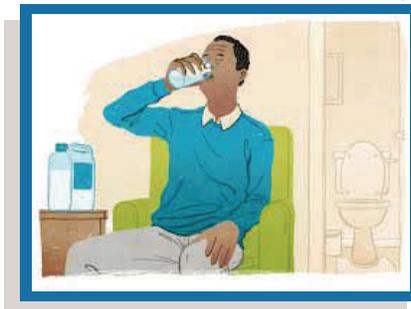
There are several things that you can do in the days before your colonoscopy to make sure that you are prepared for your exam. Your doctor will give you specific directions but here are a few general guidelines:

For the colonoscopy you will receive medication that will put you into a light sleep during the procedure.

- You will need to take the day off from work
- You will also need to arrange for a ride to and from the procedure. You not be allowed to drive yourself home after the procedure.

Your doctor will give you a prescription for medication to prepare and empty your bowels for the colonoscopy.

- Fill your bowel preparation prescription and pick it up from the pharmacy a few days ahead of time.



TIPS FOR A GOOD BOWEL PREPARATION

- On the day that your doctor instructed you to begin your bowel preparation for the colonoscopy, mix the preparation according to the directions and place in it the refrigerator. This helps to make the taste more tolerable.

- Try drinking the preparation through a straw. This way the drink bypasses your taste buds in the front of your mouth and does not taste as unpleasant.
- Stay close to a bathroom!
- Use baby wipes instead of toilet paper.
- The bowel preparation medication is intended to clean out your bowels and you will lose a lot of fluid. *It is important to drink plenty of fluids during this bowel preparation process to avoid symptoms of dehydration like dizziness, light-headedness, and headache.*



WHAT YOU EAT AND DRINK BEFORE THE COLONOSCOPY IS IMPORTANT FOR A GOOD EXAMINATION

Your doctor will recommend a diet for you to eat in the days before your colonoscopy. You will be asked not to eat certain foods and the reason for this is simple, your colon needs to be empty of solid material so that the doctor can clearly see the inside of your colon.

Not eating the foods that you like and usually eat is difficult. But remember, the diet restrictions are only for a day or two and sticking to the recommended diet for colonoscopy is important to have a successful examination.

The consequences of not following the diet prescribed by your doctor include:

- Your doctor may have to spend more time examining your colon, making your procedure last longer;
- Your doctor may not be able to look at the entire length of your bowels;
- Your doctor may not be able to see growths (polyps or tumors) in the colon that may be present;
- You may be asked to repeat the preparation and return for another colonoscopy in a short period of time (the following week or month);
- You may need to have your next colonoscopy sooner than if your colon was clean (for example, you may need to return in 3 years instead of in 5).



Figure 1: What to eat and drink before your colonoscopy: A. soda pop, ginger ale and club soda; B. clear sports drinks; C. water; D. tea; E. popsicles; F. clear broth; G. apple juice; H. flavored Jello; and I. black coffee. Note: Avoid food and drinks that are red like cherry popsicles or red Jello.

By following the diet recommended by your doctor, you can avoid the inconvenience of repeating the preparation and the colonoscopy and taking more time off from work. Also, you can be more confident that your colonoscopy will be complete and thorough.

Community Board:

Have you been checked?? Community health workers promote colorectal cancer screening



Broadway Housing Communities (BHC), Dominican Women Development Center (DWDC), Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation (NMIC) and the Research Recruitment and Minority Outreach (RRMO) are working together to promote colorectal cancer screening.

If you have never had a colon screening, you can meet with one of our community health workers and have a private and confidential conversation about what colon cancer is, who should be screened and when, and what the different types of screening tests are.

Through our outreach and education programs, community health workers are seeking to assist community members who are 50 years of age and older **with and without health insurance** in obtaining life-saving information. They can also provide immediate referrals for colon screening.

For more information contact:

BHC: Betty Capellan
212 568-2030 X216

DWDC: Katherine Diaz
212-740-1929

NMIC: Jules Douge
212-822-8344

RRMO: Martha Sanchez
212-304-5705

If you have no health insurance, you will receive **free** colon screening.

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Uninsured women in need of **breast cancer screening**, please call Yolanda at 212-851-4516 to make an appointment for your mammogram at 161 Fort Washington Avenue (between 165th and 168th Street), 10th floor.



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