

Buffalo Gastroenterology Associates, LLP Proudly Supports Colon Cancer Awareness Month

What Is Colon Cancer?

- Cancer can develop in your colon (large intestine). This is called colon cancer.
- Usually, colon cancer begins as a polyp. A polyp is a small, grape-like growth on the inside of the colon. Polyps are not cancer, but they can turn into cancer.
- It is possible to find and remove polyps *before* cancer develops.
- Looking for polyps and removing them can save your life!

Colon Cancer Awareness

Colonoscopy is the most popular test to prevent colon cancer. An experienced doctor puts a very thin, flexible tube (a *colonoscope*) into the anus in order to look at the inside of your colon.

The doctor looks for polyps or cancer. If polyps are found, the doctor removes these during the exam. This will help to prevent colon cancer.

The day before your colonoscopy you will be given a bowel preparation to clean out your colon. This will let the doctor get a clear look inside your colon. You will go to the bathroom many times.

You will be given a light sedation before the colonoscopy to help you feel relaxed and comfortable. The exam takes about half an hour and you should plan to miss a day of work. You will need someone to drive you home after the exam.

With colonoscopy, there is a very small risk of bleeding or poking a hole in the colon. This would require surgery to fix. This happens less than 1 in 2,500 times.

Colonoscopy is not as difficult as some people may think. Many like the "peace of mind" it gives them.

FAQ's

Q: Are there tests other than a colonoscopy?

A: Yes, There are other tests you could have. These include tests to find tiny amounts of blood in your stool (stool cards), flexible sigmoidoscopy (similar to a colonoscopy, but the doctor only looks at half of the colon), and barium enema (x-rays).

Any of these tests is a good option, but they can miss polyps and, if something abnormal is found, a colonoscopy will be needed to see what the problem is. Also, unlike colonoscopy, they need to be done every year or every few years.

If you have any questions about these other tests, please speak with your primary care doctor.

Q: What about cost?

A: Most insurance plans, including Medicare, pay for colonoscopy. Sometimes, there may be a co-pay that you must pay. Some insurance plans have eliminated the co-pay for routine screening procedures such as colonoscopy. Call your insurance provider if you have any questions about cost or coverage.

How Common Is Colon Cancer?

- Colon Cancer is very common:
- 1 in 20 adults will develop colon cancer.
- Women develop colon cancer as often as men.
- More than 50,000 people die each year in the U.S. from this cancer.
- Everyone is at risk for developing polyps and colon cancer.
- The older you are, the greater your risk.

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