GET CHECKED FOR COLON CANCER
Colonoscopies Save Lives

What are polyps and colon cancer?

- Polyps are growths—or small clumps of cells— in the large intestine (colon). Some polyps are harmless, but some can turn into colon cancer.

- Removing polyps from the colon and rectum can help prevent cancer.

- People who are age 45 or older should talk to their health care provider about getting screened for colon cancer, even if they feel healthy.

- High-risk people who are younger than age 45 should also get screened to help prevent colon cancer. Talk to your health care provider about your risk.

- Even if you feel healthy, get a colonoscopy every 10 years or a stool (fecal) test every year.

What are the signs and symptoms?

- Symptoms of colon cancer include weight loss, bleeding from the rectum, diarrhea and constipation that doesn't go away.

- Blood tests in people with possible colon cancer might show low iron or low blood count (anemia).

- People with colon cancer often do not show signs right away.

Why should I get a colonoscopy?

- Testing allows doctors to find polyps and remove them before they become cancer.

What is a colonoscopy?

- During a colonoscopy, the doctor inserts a small tube with a light and camera into your rectum. They use the camera to look for polyps.
  - If the doctor finds polyps, they usually remove them during the test.
  - The test takes from 30 to 60 minutes.

What happens before the test?

- Your health care provider will give you a medicine to drink the day before the test. The medicine cleans out your colon, so you will have to use the bathroom often. You must drink a clear liquid diet (see reverse for examples) the entire day before.

- You may have to stop taking some medicines you normally take, like aspirin or blood thinners. Talk to your provider about stopping your medications one week before the test.

- On the day of the test, you will not eat or drink anything until the test is completed.

- Right before the test, you may be given medicine to help you relax.

What happens after the test?

- You will rest in the recovery area until the medicine wears off.

- You will need someone, like a friend or family member, to take you home after the test.

Are colonoscopies safe?

- Colonoscopies are safe, with few risks such as:
  - Reaction to the medicine you take before the test.
  - Bleeding after polyp removal. This usually stops on its own.
  - Tear in the colon or rectum wall. This occurs rarely, can cause pain and may require surgery to fix it.

When should I contact my health care provider?

- Contact your provider if you see blood on your toilet paper or in your stool, or if you feel dizzy, have severe pain in your belly or have a fever and chills.

Does the test hurt?

- You might feel pressure, bloating or cramping during the test, but the test usually does not hurt.

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HOW TO PREPARE FOR YOUR COLONOSCOPY

Health Care Provider: Fill in the appropriate days, dates and contact information below.

Seven Days Before Day: Date:	**If you take any of the following medications, tell your health care provider. You may need to stop taking these medications the week before your colonoscopy:** ■ Aspirin ■ Pain or arthritis medicine ■ Iron supplements ■ Ibuprofen ■ Blood thinners (e.g., Warfarin) ■ Diabetes medicine
Six to Two Days Before	**Follow a normal diet and drink plenty of fluids.**
One Day Before Day: Date:	**Bowel preparation:** Your health care provider has prescribed you medicine to prepare your colon for the test. It is important to take the medicine as directed. If you have any questions or concerns, call your health care provider at: _____.
One Day Before Day: Date:	**Diet instructions:** 1. Starting when you wake up, DO NOT EAT ANY SOLID FOOD. This includes grains (e.g., bread, pasta, rice, cereal, etc.), fish, meat, beans, tofu, milk products (e.g., milk, cheese, ice cream, yogurt, butter, etc.), vegetables and fruit. 2. Stick to a CLEAR LIQUID DIET, including these clear and light-colored liquids. DO NOT drink colas or red or purple drinks. ■ Clear broth (e.g., vegetable or fat-free chicken broth) ■ Light-colored popsicles ■ Clear soda or seltzer ■ Light-colored sports drinks (NOT red or purple) ■ Clear gelatin dessert ■ Water or ice ■ Tea or coffee without milk or cream ■ Clear, pulp-free fruit juice (e.g., apple, white grape) 3. Be sure to have AT LEAST EIGHT SERVINGS (i.e., 8 cups) of clear liquid.
Day of Colonoscopy Day: Date:	**DO NOT EAT OR DRINK ANYTHING.** Note: If your provider instructed you to take any medications, you may drink water when you take them. **Plan to have an adult take you home after the test.**

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