What to expect at your colonoscopy

Overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What will happen?</th>
<th>About how long will it take?*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 1: Check-in</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2: Prepare with your nurse</td>
<td>15–20 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 3: Meet with your doctor</td>
<td>5–10 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 4: Colonoscopy</td>
<td>20–45 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 5: Recovery</td>
<td>30 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 6: Discharge</td>
<td>5–10 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Times may vary. Please allow at least two hours for your visit.

Step 1: Check-in
When you check in, you will be asked for your insurance card, a picture ID, and any copayment that is due at that time.

Step 2: Prepare with your nurse
You will be taken to a private prep room where you will put on a hospital gown or shorts. Your nurse will review your medications, allergies, and medical history with you. Your nurse will start an intravenous (IV) line in your vein. The IV provides you with sedation and pain medications during the procedure. (For more information about medications, see the other side of this handout.) Additionally, your nurse will monitor your blood pressure and oxygen.

Step 3: Meet with your doctor
You will meet the doctor who will perform the colonoscopy. Your doctor will answer any questions you may have about your procedure. After that, you will be taken to the procedure room.

Step 4: Colonoscopy
You will lie on an exam table on your left side. Your nurse will give you medications. A flexible scope will be placed in your rectum and the entire length of your colon will be examined. The doctor will take biopsies and remove polyps (growths) if needed. Your doctor and nurse will be in the room at all times. The procedure usually takes about 20-45 minutes. The amount of time depends on how well your at-home preparation worked, the length of your colon, and how many polyps are found and removed. How comfortable you are also affects how long the procedure takes. Your doctor and nurse will work with you to ensure your comfort.

Step 5: Recovery
After the procedure, you'll go to the recovery area. You'll meet the nurse who will take care of you as you wake up from the medication. You will spend about 30 minutes in recovery. During this time the medication will begin to wear off and you can have something to drink as long as you feel okay. Once you feel better and are more awake, your nurse will tell you what your doctor learned during the procedure.

Step 6: Discharge with responsible adult
Your nurse will talk to you about your discharge instructions. Since you may have a hard time remembering things due to the medication, you will receive the instructions in writing to take home with you. After all your questions are answered, you can go home in the care of a responsible adult. By the time you are discharged, you will be able to walk. However, you will not be able to drive, operate machinery, or go to work or school until the following day. You may be forgetful and have impaired reaction times for the rest of the day.
Answers to Common Questions

1. Why has my doctor recommended a colonoscopy for me?

Evidence shows that colon cancer screening save lives, and colonoscopy is considered the gold standard for screening. It allows the doctor to detect and remove polyps (benign growths than can become cancerous).

2. What are some common patient misconceptions about colonoscopies?

The most common misconception is that the colonoscopy will be uncomfortable. Your doctor and nurse work very hard to ensure your comfort during every step of the procedure. The procedure is usually very well tolerated by most patients. Most patients say that the prep is worse than the actual colonoscopy. With that in mind, HealthPartners has worked to improve the options for patients and now uses two different preps: the new Miralax and Gatorade or Powerade mixture and the standard Golytely. Your care team will choose your prep for you based on your health history.

3. What exactly happens during the colonoscopy?

The procedure involves a rectal exam. A flexible scope is placed in the rectum and moved through the entire colon. The doctor will expand your colon with air which allows for better viewing. The doctor will slowly withdraw the scope and examine the colon. The air is then slowly taken out of the colon. The doctor will take biopsies and remove polyps (growths) if needed. About 1 in 4 people have polyps removed during their procedure.

4. Will I be comfortable the whole time?

Your comfort and safety during the procedure are the top priority for your doctor and nurse. You will receive medications that help you feel as comfortable as possible. It is important to note that the medications do not block all sensation. Typically, if there is discomfort it will not last long and improves with breathing and relaxation. Your nurse will monitor your blood pressure, heart rate and oxygen. If these levels are good and you need more medication, your nurse will give it to you. You may have cramps and feel some pressure as the scope moves through your colon. The cramping and discomfort typically begin to lessen once the scope reaches the end of the colon.

5. What medications are used during the procedure?

You’ll get medications to help you relax and block pain during your procedure. Your nurse will give you the medications under the supervision of your doctor. You will receive a narcotic (Fentanyl) to help block the pain and a sedative (Versed) to help you relax. The sedative Versed affects memory. You may have a hard time remembering the entire procedure. The combination of the medications will make you drowsy and relaxed very quickly.

The medications will make you feel very relaxed and cause your breathing to slow down and become shallow. Your blood pressure may also drop a little. Your doctor and nurse will monitor these things during the procedure. You will wear a pulse and oxygen monitor on your finger. Your blood pressure will be checked every few minutes. If needed, we’ll give you extra fluids through the IV and extra oxygen through nasal tubing or a face mask. We may also ask you to take deep breaths during the procedure. You may fall asleep, but will wake up easily to respond to people in the room.

6. Do I have to be sedated?

You may choose to not be sedated and you and your doctor can discuss this option if you have concerns about taking medication. Most patients find that the medication helps them feel relaxed and comfortable during the procedure. Your comfort plays a role in how long the procedure takes, so choosing to use no medication may cause the procedure to take longer. Your doctor will help you understand which option is best for you.

7. What do I do if I have questions prior to my appointment?

We welcome your questions. Please call us at 651-254-8680.