

Virtual Colonoscopy (VC)

What is virtual colonoscopy?

Virtual colonoscopy (VC) is a screening test that uses CT to help prevent and find colorectal cancer. It looks at the colon for polyps that may become cancerous. The CT scan takes a picture of the inside of your colon while we place air in the colon. This test is less invasive and safer. It helps doctors to “fly” through the inside of the colon by looking at the CT pictures instead of putting a scope inside the colon. You should start this screening at age 45. If you have a parent, brother, sister, or child with colorectal cancer, ask your doctor if you should start screening sooner than age 45.



The test takes about 20-30 minutes. The doctor can also see some CT pictures outside of the colon in the abdomen and pelvis. This may help find problems in the abdomen and pelvis such as abdominal aneurysms, other cancers, or problems you may not have been aware of.

You do not need sedation, so you do not need someone to drive you home. You can go back to your normal routine or work as soon as the exam is done. We ask that you

wait to start eating until we call with your results in about 2 hours.

This test is safe for patients on blood thinners. You do not have to stop your medicine.

VC can be used to screen the whole colon in patients that could not have a full standard colonoscopy.

We will give you the prep kit so there is no co-pay. The prep kit uses a low volume bowel prep that you complete the night before the exam.

We can set up a standard colonoscopy the same day to remove polyps without having to do the bowel prep again. If we find a polyp less than 1 cm, patients have the choice of “watchful waiting” with a follow-up VC exam in 3 years or having it removed the same day.

We often can schedule your VC within one week or at a time that works for you. We may also be able to do a CT bone mineral density to screen for osteoporosis. You can have this at the same time as the VC exam with no extra scans or cost.

Colorectal Cancer

Colorectal cancer is an abnormal growth of tissue in the colon or rectum that often begins as a non-cancerous polyp (growth). You rarely have symptoms. The key is to be screened **before** symptoms start. Some polyps if left to grow over time will change into a tumor or cancer. You can prevent cancer if we find a polyp in your colon and remove it. There is a much better chance of survival if found early.

The lifetime risk of getting this cancer is 1 in 23 for men and 1 in 25 for women. It is the third most common cancer and the second leading cause of cancer deaths overall.

Who to Call

Virtual Colonoscopy Program
(608) 263-9630

Call if you have questions. You can also view the bowel prep instructions and watch a video about what to expect with a VC exam at: **uwhealth.org/vcprep**

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 5/2023 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#5995.