

Colon Polyps

This handout explains colon polyps and what you can expect if one is found during your colonoscopy.

Polyps

Polyps are small growths of tissue that can be seen during a colonoscopy. Finding a polyp during a procedure is common (30-50% of adults have them).

Most polyps are benign (non-cancerous) and can grow without causing any symptoms. Some polyps have an area of cancer or may develop into cancer later, which is why they are removed. Colon cancer almost always begins as a colon polyp. Polyps can slowly change into cancer, which is why most patients are told to have a colonoscopy at least every 10 years.

Risk Factors

- Over the age of 50
- Family history of polyps or colon cancer
- Your history of polyps
- Lifestyle: smoking, drinking alcohol, lack of exercise, overweight, a diet high in fatty foods, red meats or processed meats

If a Polyp is Found

Most polyps can be fully and safely removed during your colonoscopy. You will not feel any pain when the polyp is removed. The polyp will be sent to the lab for testing. Your doctor will receive the lab results and contact you within 1-2 weeks with the results. If you have not received your results in 2 weeks call **608-890-5000**.

Next Steps

There are many types of polyps. The type of polyp(s) that you have helps your doctor decide when you will need your next colonoscopy. If a polyp is found it is likely that your next colonoscopy will be scheduled in 3–5 years; but, this depends on many factors:

- The type of the polyp
- The number and size of the polyps
- What we see in the colon during the colonoscopy
- If we were able to do a full colonoscopy exam

Most Common Kinds of Polyps

- **Hyperplastic**
Hyperplastic polyps are often found in the end of the colon, are usually small (less than 5mm) and do not have a risk of turning into cancer. Since it is hard to tell the difference between a hyperplastic polyp and something that could be cancerous during a colonoscopy these may be removed and sent for testing.
- **Adenoma**
Adenomatous polyps account for 2/3's of polyps found. These polyps tend to be larger and have the chance to turn into cancer. These polyps are further studied based on size and how they look under a microscope.

Your doctor cannot be certain of the type of polyp just by how it looks, so taking it out is advised.

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 © 8/2019 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#7917