

Colonoscopy

What is a colonoscopy?

Colonoscopy is a test in which the gastroenterologist looks directly at the lining of the lower intestine (called “colon” or “large intestine”) with a narrow bendable tube mounted with a camera and light. This lubricated instrument is inserted into the sedated patient via the anus and can travel to just above the colon, into the lowest part of the small intestine. Tiny tissue samples (biopsies) are usually taken during the examination, and the doctor can also remove growths (polyps) using the scope.

Why might a child need a colonoscopy?

The most common conditions leading to colonoscopy in children are:

- ◆ Blood in the stool
- ◆ Diarrhea of unknown cause
- ◆ Abdominal pain that might be due to intestinal inflammation
- ◆ Follow up of a chronic condition involving the lining of the intestine



What happens before and after the test?

In the days right before the test, your child will need to take oral medicine to flush out all the stool, and will also need to drink lots of clear fluids. It is important that during this time he/she does not eat any solid food or drink any liquids that you can't see through. For 2 or more hours right before the colonoscopy, your child cannot have anything to eat or drink, as this would make it less safe to have the sedation/anesthesia (sleeping medication) needed for the test. You will be given more detailed instructions on all of the above by your child's doctor or nurse.

After the test, the doctor will tell you what was seen with the scope, and may have pictures of your child's intestine to show you. You will get biopsy results later. Once your child is awake and drinking liquids, he/she can go home and start eating as before. A few children feel sick after the test and may be watched a little longer until they feel better.

SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS :

Colonscopy continued

What are the risks of colonoscopy?

Colonoscopy is a safe procedure, but does have some small risks. In general these are:

- ◆ A hole made in the intestinal wall (“perforation”)
- ◆ Excessive bleeding
- ◆ Problems from the sleeping medications given for the test
- ◆ Infection

Your gastroenterologist will go over these and any other risks related to your own child’s situation.

What should we watch for after the colonoscopy?

Your child may have a little blood in the stool for a day or so, and this is ok. There may be discomfort from gas in the intestine left over from the test, which will pass with time, as the child lets it out. However, if your child has any of the following, you should call your doctor or go to the emergency department:

- ◆ Abdominal pain for more than an hour
- ◆ An abdomen that is big and hard
- ◆ Bleeding more than about a spoonful, or bleeding that continues beyond the second day
- ◆ Fever
- ◆ Throwing up repeatedly

LINKS:

Endoscopic pictures of the normal colon:

http://www.gastrointestinalatlas.com/English/Colon_and_Rectum/Normal_Colon/normal_colon_.html

General tips on preparing children for procedures:

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/002056.htm>
(toddler)

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/002057.htm>
(pre-school)

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/002058.htm>
(school age)

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/002054.htm>
(adolescent)



For more information or to locate a pediatric gastroenterologist in your area please visit our website at: www.naspghan.org

IMPORTANT REMINDER: This information from the North American Society for Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition (NASPGHAN) is intended only to provide general information and not as a definitive basis for diagnosis or treatment in any particular case. It is very important that you consult your doctor about your specific condition.

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