

# What is a Colonoscopy?

A colonoscopy is an examination of the lower gastrointestinal tract, or digestive tract. The digestive tract is the system in your body that takes in food, absorbs its nutrients, and gets rid of waste.

The lower digestive tract includes the colon and the rectum. This is where polyps can form. If left untreated some polyps can develop into colorectal cancer.

During a colonoscopy, your gastroenterologist or surgeon can see a detailed view of your lower digestive tract using a thin flexible tube with a small camera attached to the end of it, called a colonoscope.

Currently, colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer deaths, but most cases of colon cancer can be prevented or successfully treated if detected early. Colonoscopy plays a key role. Average risk individuals should undergo colonoscopy at age 50. If you have a parent or sibling who has had colon cancer, you should have a colonoscopy 10 years before the age they were when diagnosed.

*"Because of your family history of colon cancer I recommend you undergo a colonoscopy."* – Doctor

Talk to your healthcare provider about your risk factors and when you should have a colonoscopy to screen for colorectal cancer.

Your doctor may also recommend you have a colonoscopy to check for and remove polyps, or if you have anemia, chronic diarrhea, blood in the stool, or inflammatory bowel disease.

Having a colonoscopy will help your doctor to identify any problems in your digestive tract, so you can get treatment or they can stop it before it becomes serious.