

# What is a colonoscopy?

Your health care provider uses colonoscopies to screen for colorectal cancer (colon and rectal cancer), precancerous growths (polyps) and other conditions in the large intestine.

Your provider can also use the procedure to diagnose causes for blood in your stool, unexplained weight loss and other conditions in the stomach and intestines.

## When to get a colonoscopy

Get a colonoscopy at age 45 and every 10 years after or per your primary provider's recommendation. Talk with your health care provider if you think you are at an increased risk for colorectal cancer.

## Types of colonoscopies

There are two types of colonoscopies – diagnostic and preventive screening.

Our team can perform a **preventive screening colonoscopy** when you don't have rectal or colon cancer symptoms.

We offer **diagnostic colonoscopies** as a follow-up test if stomach or intestinal issues, such as bleeding, abdominal pain or diarrhea, are present.

## Preparing for your colonoscopy

Use our [Colonoscopy: What You Need To Know](#) guide to help you prepare for your colonoscopy.

[Colonoscopy Bowel Prep Instructions](#)

Before your colonoscopy:

- You will receive directions about when and how to empty (cleanse) your colon. Follow these directions carefully. [Link for bowel prep instructions above.](#)
- You will need to use the bathroom often. Plan to stay near a bathroom during this time.
- Plan to have someone drive you home from the procedure. You will have sedation and won't be able to drive.

## **During your colonoscopy**

You'll take a light sedative medication through an intravenous (IV) line to help you relax.

A long, narrow flexible tube (a "scope") with a tiny camera is gently inserted into the rectum to see the entire colon. Air is carefully pumped into the colon, giving your provider the best possible view of the colon lining.

A colonoscopy takes about 30 minutes. Diagnostic biopsies and colonoscopies are not painful.

## **After your colonoscopy**

You'll stay at the hospital for about 30 minutes after the procedure as you recover from the sedation. Your after-visit summary will cover recovery and dietary instructions from your provider. You will need a driver to drive you home and stay with you for 12 hours.

Side effects after a colonoscopy may include:

- short-term discomfort (cramping and gas-like pain)
- bloating, nausea (upset stomach)
- vomiting (throwing up)
- chills
- abdominal (belly) pain
- diarrhea (loose stools)
- anus irritation.

# Colonoscopy and biopsy results

You and your primary care provider can access colonoscopy results right away in your [Allina Health Account](#). Your proceduralist may perform a biopsy to test small tissue or cells from your body for cancer or another condition. Biopsy and polyp results should be ready in 10 to 14 days via your Allina Health Account.

## Colonoscopy risks

The possibility of developing colon or colorectal cancer outweigh your chances of colonoscopy complications (problems).

While rare, some complications include:

- having a negative reaction to the sedative
- bleeding from where a tissue sample was taken or a polyp was removed — This affects about eight in 10,000 people
- a torn (perforation) colon or rectum wall
  - This affects about four in 10,000 people.
- missing a polyp or lesion hiding behind a fold or a bend in the colon.

## Health insurance coverage and cost

Contact your health insurance provider about medical coverage and [get a price estimate](#) before scheduling a colonoscopy. You will pay any deductible amounts and charges your policy doesn't cover.