

North Florida Surgery Center

COLONOSCOPY

Colonoscopy is a procedure in which a doctor uses a flexible, narrow lighted tube called the colonoscope, to look inside the entire colon. This exam is used to find possible causes of rectal bleeding, abdominal pain, weight loss, unexplained changes in bowel habits, chronic constipation, and chronic diarrhea. Colonoscopy is used as the main method for screening colon cancer and polyps. Screening colonoscopy is advised for average risk patients at age 50 and thereafter at 10 year intervals. Patients who are at higher risk of colon cancer which include, family history of colon cancer or polyps, inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), such as ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease, may be advised to have colon screening at an earlier age and test more often.

During colonoscopy, the doctor can remove polyps, which are growths in the lining of the colon. Most polyps are not cancerous, but over time these can turn into cancer. By removing these polyps, colonoscopy can prevent most colon cancers. Doctors can also remove small tissue samples (biopsies) and send to pathology for diagnosis of colonic diseases.

Preparing for Colonoscopy

Thorough cleaning of the entire colon (bowel) is essential for a successful and complete colonoscopy. Your doctor will provide you with the full instructions for bowel preparation. You must also arrange for someone to drive you home as you are not allowed to drive due to sedation.

Procedure (What happens during colonoscopy?)

Intravenous (IV) sedation is used to keep you comfortable during the procedure. Doctors and nurses will continue to monitor your vital signs. You will be lying on your left side during the procedure. Once you are sedated, the colonoscope is inserted into the rectum and gently moved around the bends of the colon and the entire colon is gradually visualized. The doctor can see the lining of the colon on a video screen. The procedure usually takes 20-30 minutes. Most patients do not remember the procedure afterwards.

After the procedure, you will be taken to a recovery area. It can take about 30 minutes for the sedation to wear off. Once you are awake, the doctor will discuss the results of the procedure. If biopsies were taken, or polyps were removed, the doctor will give you a follow up appointment to discuss the results. At the time of discharge, you will be given post procedure instructions and a follow up appointment with your doctor.