

**Eureka Family Practice  
2675 Harris St.  
Eureka CA 95503**

## **Colonoscopy – Patient Information**

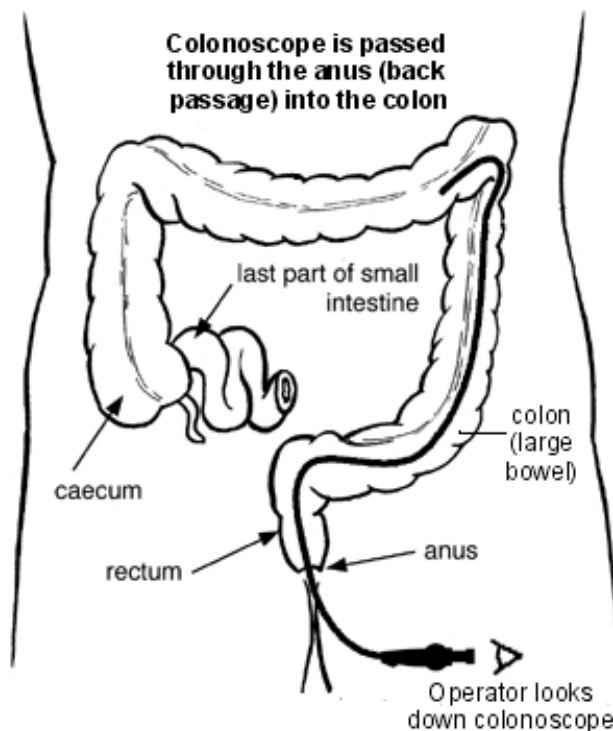
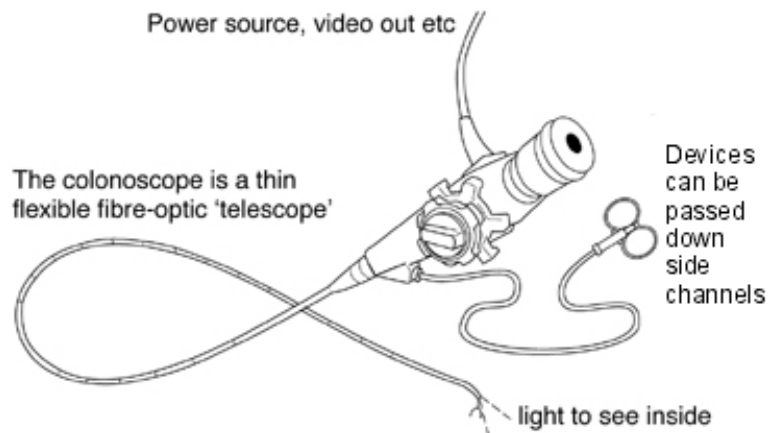
### **What is a Colonoscopy?**

Colonoscopy is a test where a physician looks into your colon. The colon is sometimes also called the large intestine or large bowel. This procedure allows the physician to look inside your entire large intestine, from the lowest part, the rectum, all the way up through the colon to the lower end of the small intestine. The procedure is primarily used to look for polyps and early signs of cancer in the colon and rectum. It is also used to diagnose the causes of unexplained changes in bowel habits.

During the procedure the physician uses a colonoscope, which is a thin, flexible, telescope. It is about as thick as the little finger. The colonoscope is passed through the anus and into the colon. It can then be pushed all the way around the colon as far as the cecum (where the small and large intestine meet).

The colonoscope contains fiber optic channels that allow light to shine down so the operator can see inside your colon. It also has a 'side channel' which allows the physician to take small samples of tissue (a biopsy) from the inside lining of the colon. Biopsies do not hurt as the lining of the colon does not have the same pain sensation as your skin, however, you may experience some cramping as air is introduced through the scope and the scope is passed through twisty segments of the colon. This may also make you feel bloated, and may cause you to pass wind. This is normal and there is no need to be embarrassed as the staff will expect this to happen.

Colonoscopy is done as an outpatient or day case. Before your procedure you will be asked to change into a hospital gown and to lie on your left side with your legs in a curled position. You will be given an intravenous sedative and a pain reducer just before the procedure begins. The sedative can make you drowsy but it does not 'put you to sleep'. It is not a general anesthetic. However, due to the medication's effects, it is very likely that you will not remember details of the procedure. The colonoscopy itself usually takes about 20-30 minutes. As a general rule, you will be awake and able to leave about 1 hour after the procedure is completed.



## Before the procedure

To allow a clear view the whole large bowel (colon) must be completely empty of waste material. It is essential that you follow your preparation instructions.

Occasionally, during or following the bowel preparation you may experience abdominal pain or a headache. It is fine to take acetaminophen (Tylenol) if desired.

## Medicines and Medical Conditions

It is important you bring a list of your current medication with you so that you can give it to the nurse on arrival.

### **What are the risks and complications?**

Most colonoscopies are done without any problem. You may feel tired or sleepy for several hours afterwards caused by the sedative. You may pass a small amount of blood from your anus if a biopsy was taken, or a polyp was removed.

Occasionally, the colonoscope may cause damage to the colon. This may cause bleeding, infection, and rarely, perforation. If any of the following occur within 48 hours after a colonoscopy, it is important that you consult a doctor immediately:

- Abdominal pain. (In particular if it becomes gradually worse, and is different or more intense to any 'usual' pains that you may have.)
- Fever (raised temperature).
- Passing a lot of blood from your anus
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### **After the procedure**

Dr. Leer will talk to you at the end of the procedure, explaining what has been found. If a biopsy has been taken the results of this may take several days.

You will be left to rest as you may feel sleepy if you have had sedation. If you chose to have sedation it is a good idea for the person taking you home to be with you when you speak to the physician. If sedation has been used, people find they forget what has been said and may not even recollect having the test at all. Once you have returned home you may begin to eat and drink normally and resume your normal medication, unless instructed otherwise by the Doctor. Following sedation you must not do any of the following for 24 hours:

- *Drive a motor vehicle*
- *Drink Alcohol*
- *Operate Machinery*
- *Sign Legal Documents*

### **Where to go**

Your colonoscopy will be performed at the General Hospital Gastroenterology (GI) Lab. You may enter the building through either the main front entrance or the Lab entrance, and signs will point you to your destination.

### **Useful sources of information**

Additional information can be found at the National library of Medicine website:  
<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/portals/public.html>

**If any questions arise please call Eureka Family Practice at 707-443-8335 and leave a message with Dr. Leer's Medical Assistant.**