

## COLON POLYPS

Colon polyps are small growths that form on the inside of the colon (also called the large intestine). Polyps are very common: 25% of patients at the age of 50 will have polyps. Although they do not usually cause symptoms, some polyps can already be or may one day become cancer. If polyps are found, they are removed in order to prevent cancer from developing.

Doctors usually find colon polyps when they are doing screening tests, usually colonoscopy, to check for colon or rectal cancer. Cancer screening tests are tests that are done to try and find cancer before a person has symptoms.

If polyps are found, they can be removed with special tools that are used during colonoscopy. This prevents polyps from turning into cancer.

Depending on the number and type of polyps you have, colonoscopy may be needed every few years to check for more polyps as polyps can come back. If you had the kind of polyps that could become cancer, your doctor will want to remove them as they appear. If the polyps you had removed were the kind that could become cancer, people in your family should also be checked for polyps and colon cancer, too.

In some cases, the polyps are too big or too numerous to be removed in one colonoscopy session. Repeat colonoscopy may be necessary and in very rare cases, surgery may be required if the polyp is too big or growing too deep into the wall of the colon.

To reduce your chances of getting polyps and colon cancer:

- Maintain a normal weight for your size (Body mass index < 25)
- Eat a healthy diet with lots of fruits and vegetables
- Do not smoke
- Do not drink alcohol excessively
- Get a colonoscopy at the age recommended by your physician (usually age 50 for Caucasian, Asian and Hispanic populations, and age 45 for African Americans, if there is no family history of cancer and if there are no symptoms)