

SEVEN THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT A COLONOSCOPY

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WHAT IS A COLONOSCOPY?



A colonoscopy is a visual exam done by a doctor to look at your colon and rectum for polyps or signs of cancer. The doctor inserts a long thin tube with a tiny camera on the end into your colon. The doctor guides the tube through your colon and can remove polyps and take small tissue samples to test for colon cancer. A colonoscopy can actually prevent colon cancer before it starts because the doctor can remove precancerous polyps during the exam before they can turn into cancer.

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WHAT IS A BOWEL PREP?



A bowel prep is a process you will need to complete to clean out your colon before you have a colonoscopy. It is important to have a clean colon prior to a colonoscopy so the doctor can easily see polyps or signs of cancer during the exam. Bowel prep usually includes changing your diet for a few days prior to the exam, drinking lots of liquids, and taking laxatives. You will need to make frequent trips to the bathroom while completing the bowel prep, but it is the most important step in ensuring a successful and complete colonoscopy.

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WHERE ARE COLONOSCOPIES DONE AND WHO DOES THEM?



Colonoscopies are done by specially trained doctors called Gastroenterologists. Your colonoscopy may also be done by a trained surgeon. Colonoscopies are typically done at hospitals, clinics, or surgery centers. Your primary care provider can order a colonoscopy for you and help you decide where you would like to have your colonoscopy done.

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WHAT TO EXPECT



You will need to start the bowel prep a day or two before your colonoscopy is scheduled. On the day of the colonoscopy, you will finish your bowel prep and will not be able to eat before the exam. Once you arrive at the colonoscopy location, you will be given some medicine that will help you sleep through the exam. The exam will take about 30 minutes. When you wake up after the colonoscopy, the doctor may give you a report on what was done during the exam. You will then be allowed to go home but will need to arrange for a family member or friend to drive you as the medicine is wearing off. If the doctor removed any polyps or tissue samples during the colonoscopy, these will be tested for cancer and you will get a report of the results later.

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DOES IT HURT?



No, you will be asleep during the colonoscopy so you will not feel any pain. Once you wake up, you may feel some slight discomfort or grogginess as the medicine wears off. A colonoscopy is a very safe procedure and there are typically minimal side effects. You will be able to return to work or normal activities the day after the procedure.

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WHAT IF THEY FIND SOMETHING?



The doctor will be able to remove any polyps seen during the colonoscopy and will also take tissue samples if there are other signs of cancer. Any polyps removed or tissue samples taken will be tested for cancer or pre-cancer cells. The results will determine whether you need additional procedures or treatment. The doctor will let you know the results and discuss next steps with you.

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HOW OFTEN IS IT NEEDED?



You should talk to your provider about colonoscopy starting at age 45 if you are at average risk, and earlier if you have a family history or other conditions that may make you more likely to develop colon cancer. If you don't have any polyps or signs of cancer during your colonoscopy, you won't need another colonoscopy for 10 years. If you have polyps or are at higher risk because of family history or other conditions, you may need a repeat colonoscopy sooner than 10 years. You can discuss this with your

Please contact your Juniper Health provider with any questions or to schedule a colonoscopy. There are also other colon cancer screening options available that you can discuss with your provider if you'd prefer a different screening test.

Breathitt County: (606) 666-9950

Lee County: (606) 464-2401

Morgan County: (606) 743-4808

Wolfe County: (606) 668-7385

Elliott County: (606) 738-9785