

Colonoscopy

What is a colonoscopy?

A colonoscopy involves using a flexible fiberoptic tube (called a *colonoscope*) to examine the large intestine. At times the colonoscope will also be used to examine the segment of small intestine which empties into the colon (this segment of small intestine is called the *ileum*). We are able to look at the lining of these organs for abnormalities (such as inflammation or a polyp) as well as take samples of tissue (we call these *biopsies*) or samples of fluid within the bowel.

What are the indications for a colonoscopy?

A colonoscopy might be helpful in the evaluation of several problems encountered in children. A few of the indications for colonoscopy in children are listed below:

- Lower gastrointestinal bleeding
- Chronic diarrhea
- Suspected colon polyps
- Suspected inflammatory bowel disease
- Follow-up of inflammatory bowel disease
- Removal of foreign body
- Dilation of stricture
- Decompression of obstructed colon

Preparing your child for a colonoscopy

A clean colon (i.e., a colon with no particulate stool or excessive amounts of liquid stool) is necessary in order to achieve a thorough examination of the colon. There are several different methods which can be used to prepare your child for a colonoscopy. Your physician will discuss the colon prep with you and you will receive separate written instructions for this. If your child normally takes medications, please tell your physician so he or she can determine if the medication should be given or not.

If your child is sick, tell your physician before the procedure so he or she can determine if the procedure should be rescheduled or can continue as planned.

Children undergoing a colonoscopy deserve an explanation (appropriate for age) of what will happen during the procedure. Upon arrival at the Endoscopy Unit, a nurse will do admission paperwork and vital signs (blood pressure, heart rate, etc.) An IV will be started before the sedation medications are given. The IV will be used during the procedure to administer medications to make the child sleepy.

You and your child will meet the physicians who will be administering the sedation and performing the procedure. You and your child will have an opportunity to ask any questions that you may have.

Parents can join their child after the procedure. Your child will then be monitored in the sedation unit until he or she has recovered adequately. The amount of time this takes varies but is about 30–60 minutes. Some children experience mild nausea following the procedure which is usually short-lived and rarely requires treatment.



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Frequently Asked Questions

The following questions may help answer questions you have regarding the colonoscopy.

Q. Is a colonoscopy a safe procedure to do in children?

A colonoscopy is a safe procedure in children and can be performed safely even in infants. Complications are extremely rare. The complications naturally vary and depend on:

1. **The type of procedure performed.** A routine diagnostic colonoscopy with biopsies is extremely safe. A therapeutic colonoscopy performed to attempt to control bleeding or involving a polypectomy entails slightly more risk.
2. **The clinical state of the patient.** An otherwise well child has very little risk from the sedation or procedure. A child with a severe illness or who is critically ill will have a greater risk of complications.

Your physician will review the risks and benefits of the procedure as well as alternatives to the procedure with you. If you have any questions about the procedure, please ask your physician.

Q. Will the child be asleep during the procedure? Will he or she remember the procedure?

IV medications will be used to keep your child asleep during the procedure. Your child will be monitored during the entire procedure to be sure that he or she is safe and not having any pain. One of the medications given before the procedure affects short-term memory. This means that the child will not remember the procedure. The medications also help the child to relax.

Q. When and what can my child eat after the procedure?

In general, we allow the child to take sips when he or she is awake. If this is tolerated, then the diet can be advanced as tolerated (in an age-appropriate manner). The nurses or Endoscopy Unit personnel will give you more specific instructions after the procedure.

Q. Can I watch the procedure?

Parents are not allowed to stay in the endoscopy room during the procedure. (Please see the section titled "Preparing your child for a Colonoscopy.") We are able to take pictures of what we see during the endoscopy and will be able to review these with you.

Q. When will I get the results of the procedure?

After the procedure, the physician will review the results with you.

If you have other questions, contact your physician (321.841.3338). You can also speak with the physician who will be performing the procedure when you arrive.