

## What Are Colon Polyps?

A polyp is an extra tissue that grows inside your body. Colon polyps grow in the large intestine. The large intestine, also called the colon, is part of your digestive system. It's a long, hollow tube at the end of your digestive tract where your body makes and stores stool.

### Are Polyps Dangerous?

Most polyps are not dangerous. Most are benign, which means they are not cancer. But over time, some types of polyps can turn into cancer. Usually, polyps that are smaller than a pea aren't harmful. But larger polyps could someday become cancerous.

### Who Gets Polyps?

Anyone can get polyps, but certain people are more likely than others. You may have a greater chance of getting polyps if:

- you're over 50. The older you get, the more likely you are to develop polyps.
- you've had polyps before.
- someone in your family has had polyps.
- someone in your family has had cancer of the large intestine.

### Who Is More Likely?

You may be more likely to get polyps if you:

- eat a lot of fatty foods
- smoke
- drink alcohol
- don't exercise
- are overweight

## What Are the Symptoms of Colon Polyps?

Most small polyps don't cause symptoms. Often, people don't know they have one until the doctor finds it during a regular checkup or while testing them for something else.

### How Do I Get Tested For Colon Polyps?

The doctor can use three tests to check for polyps:

- **Digital Rectal Exam.** The doctor wears gloves and checks your rectum, the last part of the large intestine, to see if it feels normal. This test would find polyps only in the rectum, so the doctor may need to do one of the other tests listed below to find polyps higher up in the intestine.
- **Barium Enema.** The doctor puts a liquid called barium into your rectum before taking x-rays of your large intestine. Barium makes your intestine look white in the pictures. Polyps are dark, so they're easy to see.
- **Colonoscopy.** With this test, the doctor can see inside your large intestine. The doctor puts a thin flexible tube into your rectum. The device is called an endoscope. It has a light, a tiny video camera and a channel that allows passage of instruments to remove polyps and take biopsies. The doctor uses the endoscope to look at all of your large intestine. It usually requires sedation.

### Who Should Get Tested For Polyps?

Talk to your doctor about getting tested if :

- you're 50 years old or older.
- you've had polyps before.
- someone in your family has had polyps.
- someone in your family has had colon cancer.

## How Are Polyps Treated?

The doctor will remove the polyp. Sometimes, the doctor takes it out during a colonoscopy. Or the doctor may decide to operate through the abdomen. The polyp is then tested for cancer.

If you've had polyps, the doctor may want you to get tested regularly in the future.

### How Can I Prevent Polyps?

Doctors don't know of any one sure way to prevent polyps. But you might be able to lower your risk of getting them if you:

- eat more fruits and vegetables.
- eat less fatty foods.
- eat more calcium and folate.\*
- increase the amount of fiber in your diet.
- don't smoke.
- avoid alcohol.
- exercise every day.
- lose weight if you're overweight.

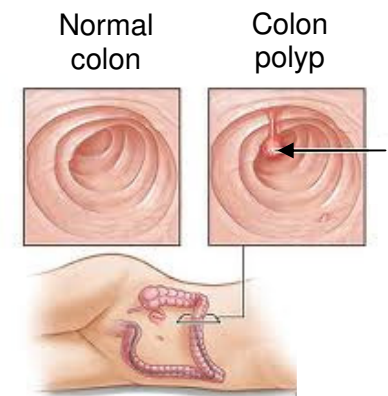
\*Some foods that are rich in calcium are milk, cheese and broccoli. Some foods that are rich in folate are chickpeas, kidney beans and spinach.

### Points To Remember

- A polyp is extra tissue that grows inside the body. Most polyps are not harmful.
- Most small polyps do not cause symptoms.
- Talk to your doctor about getting tested for polyps if:
  - you're 50 years old or older.
  - someone in your family has had polyps.
  - someone in your family has had colon cancer.

# Colon Polyps

*An informative  
pamphlet*



**The Center For Special Surgery**  
104 Lincoln Avenue  
Hawthorne, NJ 07506  
973-427-6800  
[TheCenterForSpecialSurgery.com](http://TheCenterForSpecialSurgery.com)