

HEALTHY LIVING CHRONICLES

Colon Cancer Screenings: Separate Myths from Facts



Colon cancer is the second leading cause of cancer deaths in the United States. It causes about 50,000 deaths yearly in this country. Also, this type of cancer is one of the most preventable. Studies have shown that colonoscopy screenings can reduce colorectal cancer risk by upwards of 90 percent. This procedure often enables physicians to identify and remove polyps (tumor growths) before they become cancerous.



Dr. Showkat Bashir, gastroenterologist and medical director in our Digestive Disease Center, educates us about the myths and facts about colonoscopies.

Myth #1 – A colonoscopy is very painful.

This 20-30 minute procedure often begins with patients taking a sedative to relax. In fact, most patients sleep throughout the entire procedure.

Myth #2 – Preparing for a colonoscopy is unbearable.

During a colonoscopy, it is important that the colon is thoroughly cleared of waste. That way, doctors can view the colon and remove any polyps. This process often requires that patients adhere to a clear liquid diet for one day while taking prescribed laxatives.

Myth #3 – A colonoscopy has a high risk of complications.

A colonoscopy is a safe procedure performed by certified physicians. Remember, the risk of developing colon cancer is much higher than developing colonoscopy-related complications.

Myth #4 – A colonoscopy is only needed when people have symptoms.

Colon cancer often develops without people experiencing symptoms. **That's why it is recommended that men and women ages 50 and older have a colonoscopy screening. For those who have a family history of colon cancer, a colonoscopy should be started at much earlier ages.** Also, some of the potential symptoms may include rectal bleeding, abdominal pain, change in bowel habits, extreme weight loss, etc.

Myth #5 – Women don't need a colonoscopy.

Since colon cancer can affect both genders, colonoscopy screenings are important for both women and men.

Myth #6 – A colonoscopy is the only type of colon cancer screening.

A physician can perform other screenings such as stool-based tests or special types of CT scans. Ask your doctor what type of test is appropriate for you.

If you meet the criteria, schedule an appointment today! Also, ask us about our program that provides free colonoscopies to qualified Prince George's County residents.

[240-965-4413](tel:240-965-4413) | DCHweb.org/digestive



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