

What Is a Polyp of the Colon or Rectum?

Polyps are abnormal growths in the lining of the large intestine (colon or rectum) that stick out into the intestinal canal (lumen). Polyps can occur through the large intestine or rectum, more commonly found in the sigmoid colon (left colon), or rectum.

Polyps are one of the most common conditions affecting the colon and rectum. Although most polyps are benign (non-cancerous), some may be malignant (cancerous) or can lead to cancer.

How do I know if I have polyps?

Most polyps do not have any symptoms and often are only found during exams of the bowel such as a colonoscopy. This is the reason for routine screening exams.

Some polyps can cause bleeding, mucous discharge (drainage), changes in bowel habits (constipation or diarrhea), or abdominal pain.

How can I fix it?

Removal of the entire polyp is suggested. Most polyps can be removed during a colonoscopy or flexible sigmoidoscopy.

Large polyps may need more than one treatment for complete removal. Surgery is only needed when the polyp cannot be removed during the colonoscopy or flexible sigmoidoscopy.

Will a single treatment fix it?

Once a polyp is completely removed it is not likely to come back. However, new polyps often come back in thirty percent of people who have a history of polyps. Patients should have regular colonoscopies.

How can I learn more?

You can also find information through the American Society of Colon & Rectal Surgeons (ASCRS) at <http://www.fascrs.org/patients/conditions/>

Do you have any questions or comments for your doctor?

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