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# What is a Colon Polyp?

## What is a colon polyp?

A colon polyp is a small growth on the inner lining of the large intestine, some of which can progress into cancer. Polyps may be scattered throughout the colon and vary in size from a few millimeters to several centimeters. Polyps may have a flat or raised appearance. When raised they can resemble small bumps (called sessile), or even grow on short stalks (called pedunculated), resembling a mushroom or small cauliflower.

Colon polyps are important because of their known relationship to colon cancer. It is well established that most colon cancers arise from colon polyps. By identifying and removing colon polyps during colonoscopy, we can prevent their progression to cancer and ultimately save lives.

The vast majority of polyps are NOT cancerous. The precancerous polyp, which can turn into a cancer, is called an adenoma. The two most common types of colorectal polyps are hyperplastic polyps and adenomas. Since it is hard to determine the exact nature of a polyp, polyps found during colonoscopy are removed and sent to the lab for a microscopic analysis.

Current theories propose it will take about 10 years for a small adenoma to transform into a cancer. That is why the standard interval for screening colonoscopy is 10 years.

However, the time interval may be shorter for patients with a hereditary form of colon cancer, colon polyp history, or inflammatory bowel disease. The recommended intervals are general guidelines and may not apply to every patient.

