

Dear Patient:

Your family doctor has referred you to the Ontario Colorectal Cancer Screening Program at Hamilton Health Sciences because you have:

- **A screening test which shows blood in the stool.**

OR

- **A family history of colon cancer** – One of your parents or a brother or sister has had colon cancer.

These 2 reasons can increase your risk of developing colon cancer.

The Ontario Colorectal Cancer Screening Program is a program to reduce deaths from colon cancer. The program allows for more people to be checked, and if needed, treated for early colon cancer.

The risk of colon cancer is higher if you have blood in your stools or if you have close relatives who have had colon cancer. Individuals who have an increased risk of colon cancer will be offered early screening. Early screening means having a colonoscopy.

What is a colonoscopy?

A colonoscopy is a procedure to look inside your colon (often called the large bowel) and to remove or take samples of any problem area.

By performing a colonoscopy, the doctor can check for colon cancer and remove growths on the lining of the colon called polyps. Some polyps can turn into cancer over time. It is not possible to tell just by looking at a polyp if it is cancer. The polyp needs to be removed and then it is examined in the lab. Tissue samples are also taken if cancer is suspected and sent to the lab.

What happens next?

- ✓ An appointment date has been made for you and is found on the enclosed patient education prep sheet.
- ✓ You will see a doctor who will talk to you and perform a colonoscopy. The doctor will discuss the results of the colonoscopy with you and let you know what the next steps will be.

Worried? Not sure what to do?

We are here to help you understand why screening is important for your health. If you have concerns or medical problems that make the procedure more difficult, you can discuss these with the doctor **before** the colonoscopy is schedule.

please turn over →

How is a colonoscopy done?

The doctor uses an instrument called a colonoscope. This is a long flexible tube with a camera and a light at the end. The colonoscope is inserted into the anus and advanced into the rectum and the large bowel. This allows the doctor to carefully examine the lining of the large bowel and take samples of tissue or remove polyps if needed.

A colonoscopy takes about 15 to 30 minutes. Most patients receive medication to help them relax. This medication is given with a needle through an intravenous line, or IV.

The doctor will tell you what he or she is doing. You will be lying in a comfortable position on your left side or on your back while the colonoscope is inserted. A colonoscopy may feel uncomfortable. There can be a feeling of pressure or cramping at various times during the colonoscopy.

After your colonoscopy, a nurse will care for you until the medication has worn off. You will be informed about the results of your colonoscopy. You will be given instructions on how to care for yourself after your colonoscopy when you go home. **You must have another adult meet you and take you home, even if you go by bus or taxi.**

Is a colonoscopy safe?

Although a colonoscopy is a safe procedure, complications can sometimes happen. One complication is a hole or puncture of the wall of the bowel. It is called a perforation. Surgery may be needed to fix a perforation. The chance of a perforation is 1 in 2000.

Another possible complication is bleeding. The chance of bleeding is about 1 in 2000 and surgery may be needed to fix this problem.

You will be asked to sign a form that confirms your consent to have a colonoscopy. By signing the form, you are stating that you understand the risks and are giving the doctor permission to do the colonoscopy. If there is anything you don't understand, please ask for more information.

Preparing for your colonoscopy

Instructions have been sent with this letter. Please follow these instructions to prepare for your colonoscopy.

We need 3 working days notice to cancel or change an appointment. This will allow us to use this appointment time for another patient. If you are not able to attend your appointment or have questions, please call 905-521-2100, ext. 75352.

For more information about colorectal cancer screening go to: <http://www.cancercare.on.ca/>

Thank you.