The **goal** of the Colon Cancer Prevention Program:

- To find colon cancers in the **early stage** when there is a better chance of successful treatment and cure.
- To find and remove polyps that may later develop into cancer.

What is a Colonoscopy?
A colonoscopy is a diagnostic procedure in which the doctor uses a flexible tube with a light at the tip called a colonoscope to look at the lining of the colon from the rectum to the end of the large colon called the cecum.

What are the Benefits?
A colonoscopy provides the best view of the lining of the colon and is more likely to find polyps that may have caused the abnormal FIT result. The procedure also allows the doctor to remove polyps using special equipment through the channel of the colonoscope.
What is the Bowel Preparation?
For the best possible examination, your colon must be completely empty of stool.

The nurse will interview you before your colonoscopy is booked and go over the bowel preparation with you.

The nurse will give you special instructions to follow starting one or two days before your colonoscopy. These instructions will include changes to your diet. The nurse will review your choices of clear liquid drinks that you can have and will encourage you to drink lots of fluid during your bowel preparation.

The nurse will review the bowel preparation instructions with you about how to mix the laxative and when to take the laxative. And the nurse will again encourage you to drink lots of clear liquids while you take the laxatives.

If you have any special medical conditions such as diabetes or a bleeding disorder, your instructions may change. The nurse will review the instructions with you and let you know if changes will be necessary. You may need to see your doctor before your colonoscopy is booked. These arrangements will be made by the nurse for you during the interview.

What should I know the day of my Colonoscopy?
- Continue to drink clear fluids until your colonoscopy, unless you are asked not to by your doctor. (clear fluids include any liquid that you can see through, such as apple juice or broth)
- Bring a list of the medications you are currently taking.
- Tell the nurse and doctor about any allergies you have to medication.
- It is okay to take your medication the morning of the procedure, unless you are asked not to by your doctor.
- If you have diabetes, special instructions about your medication or insulin or diet should have been arranged by your nurse before taking the bowel preparation.
- If you are taking blood thinning medication, special instructions about possibly stopping or adjusting your medication should have been arranged by your nurse at least one week before your procedure.
- If you need antibiotics when you have dental work, let your doctor and nurse know.
- Do not wear jewellery.
- Do not bring valuables to the hospital.
- Do not use perfumed products.
- The sedation and pain medication will affect your reaction time. It is important to have a responsible adult to take you home. You cannot drive a car for 24 hours after the procedure.
How is the Colonoscopy done?
An intravenous (IV) is started by the nurse in your hand or forearm. The doctor will give you medication through this intravenous. The doctor will give you a sedation to help relax you and a pain medication to relieve any discomfort during the procedure.

You will lie on your left side to begin the procedure. The doctor may have you move from side to side or onto your back during the procedure and the nurse will assist you if you need to move around. The doctor inserts the colonoscope into the rectum and looks at the lining of the colon from the rectum to the end of the large colon called the cecum. To look at the lining of the colon closely, the doctor will put air through the colonoscope to help inflate the colon.

This may give you some discomfort and may feel like gas cramping or a desire to have a bowel movement. If it is uncomfortable, you may ask your doctor for more medication.

The colonoscopy procedure takes approximately 30 to 45 minutes.

What is a Polyp and Why are Polyps Removed?
A polyp is a growth of tissue on the lining of the colon. Polyps can be big or small in size, and can grow anywhere along the length of the colon.

If polyps are seen, they are removed during your colonoscopy. If a polyp is left alone, they may bleed or turn to cancer.

How is a Polyp Removed?
The doctor has special equipment which is passed through the channel of the colonoscope to remove the polyp using an electric current. You should not feel any discomfort when the polyp is removed. This is because the inside of your colon does not have any nerve endings.

What should I expect after the Colonoscopy?
- You will rest in the Recovery Room. The nurse will monitor your blood pressure, pulse and breathing on a regular basis.
- You may have gas cramps following the procedure. The nurse will encourage you to pass the gas. If you have the urge to have a bowel movement, the nurse will assist you to the bathroom.
- The sedation and pain medication will affect your reaction time. It is important to have a responsible adult to take you home.
For the next 24 hours:

- Do not drive a car or operate heavy machinery.
- Do not drink alcohol.
- Do not make critical decisions that require you to be alert and coordinated.

**What are the Risks?**

A colonoscopy is considered a safe diagnostic procedure, however, although rare, there are risks associated. The nurse will review these rare risks with you during your interview. You will sign an information sheet which will let the nurse know that you understand the rare complications that can occur.

- **Bleeding** – there is a 1 in 500 chance of bleeding after removal of a polyp. You may have symptoms of abdominal pain or more than a trace of bleeding after your first bowel movement. Contact your doctor or go to the nearest emergency department.

- **Perforation** – there is a 1 in 1000 chance of perforation or a tear in the lining of the colon. This may require surgery to repair the injury. You may have symptoms of abdominal pain, a firm bloated abdomen, fever or vomiting. Contact your doctor or go to the nearest emergency department.

- **Medication reaction** – there is a chance the sedation or pain medication may lower your blood pressure, slow your breathing or slow your pulse. Your doctor and nurse will monitor your vital signs closely during the procedure and after.

- **Irritation at the intravenous site** – the intravenous site may become red and swollen and tender to touch. To soothe the swelling, place a cool compress over the site for the first 24 hours. After the first 24 hours, use a warm compress for comfort.

- **Infection** – there is a 1 in 1.8 million chance of infection. Although possible, no case has been reported in Canada. It is important you understand that the colonoscope is cleaned and disinfected or sterilized following each procedure according to the Manufacturer Recommended Guidelines.

*If you have any concerns, please discuss them with your doctor and nurse. They are here to help you.*