

What is a colorectal polyp?

A colorectal polyp is a growth that protrudes above the surface of the lining of the large colon or rectum.

Polyps are classified as either non-neoplastic (the kind that do not turn to cancer) or neoplastic (the kind that have the potential of turning to cancer).

Some neoplastic polyps can progress to cancer but usually this transformation takes seven to ten years. However, in a minority of patients these polyps can progress more rapidly into cancer.

Non-neoplastic polyps

- Hyperplastic
- Inflammatory
- Hamartoma
- Juvenile
- Peutz-Jeghers
- Mucosal

Neoplastic polyps

- Tubular or adenomatous - have a very small but definite risk of turning to cancer
- Serrated adenoma - have a small to medium risk of turning to cancer
- Tubulo-villous adenoma - have a medium risk of turning to cancer
- Villous adenoma - have a high risk of turning to cancer

What factors increase the risk of polyp formation?

- ◆ Dietary factors such as high fat and low fiber
- ◆ Personal history of colorectal cancer or neoplastic polyps
- ◆ Hereditary factors:

First degree relative (parent, sibling, or child) who have had colorectal cancer or neoplastic polyps diagnosed at or before age 60 or more than two first degree relatives with cancer or neoplastic polyps at any age

- ◆ Ulcerative colitis or Crohn's colitis involving the entire colon for more than 8 to 10 years

Can polyps be prevented?

Perhaps. The following recommendations *may* decrease the formation of polyps.

- ◆ Increased consumption of dietary fiber
- ◆ Decreased consumption of animal fat
- ◆ Decreased consumption of salted, pickled or smoked foods
- ◆ Daily calcium intake
- ◆ Moderation in alcohol consumption
- ◆ Vitamin intake such as beta carotene, folic acid, vitamin C, and vitamin E
- ◆ Medication for prevention of polyps (Studies being done at this time.)