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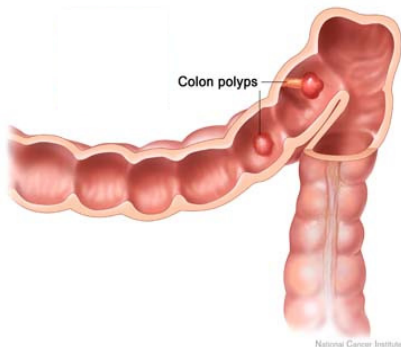
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VIRTUAL COLONOSCOPY

Virtual colonoscopy is a method to evaluate the colon using xrays instead of an optical instrument. The purpose of both is the early detection of colon cancer and, more importantly, the detection of polyps before they turn into cancer.

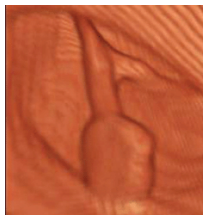


Virtual colonoscopy requires the same preparation to empty the colon as optical colonoscopy. Patients take laxatives and adhere to a clear liquid diet on the day before the procedure.

Virtual colonoscopy does not require sedation. A small tube is inserted into the anus to inject and completely fill the colon with air. Unlike optical colonoscopy, this tube is not advanced far into the colon. The CT scan then is performed, and the scans are manipulated by computer software to form virtual images of the colon.

The procedure generally requires 10-15 minutes, and patients may go to work immediately thereafter.

Virtual colonoscopy can be as accurate (or nearly as accurate) as optical colonoscopy in discovering colon cancers and large polyps, with an accuracy of 90%. However, virtual colonoscopy detects only 78% of polyps 6-9 mm in size, and few polyps 5 mm or smaller. It may find polyps "hiding" behind folds that occasionally



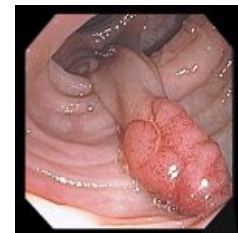
Polyp as seen
by virtual
colonoscopy

are missed by optical colonoscopy, but it is not clear that flat polyps are as visible with virtual colonoscopy as with optical colonoscopy.

Virtual colonoscopy is less invasive and faster to perform than optical colonoscopy and does not require conscious sedation. It does involve injecting air into the colon, which can be uncomfortable for some patients. In contrast, with adequate conscious sedation, patients usually experience little or no discomfort with optical colonoscopy.

Virtual colonoscopy is not as

reliable as optical colonoscopy in detecting small polyps (less than 10 mm in size). Although most small polyps are benign, some small polyps can be cancerous or become cancerous if not removed. Nor is virtual colonoscopy as accurate as



Polyp seen
at optical
colonoscopy

optical colonoscopy in finding flat cancers or polyps because they are not protruding or "sticking out."

Virtual colonoscopy may find disease outside the colon. However, it also subjects patients to radiation exposure.

Virtual colonoscopy cannot remove polyps or take biopsies. If polyps or cancer are found, then optical colonoscopy must be performed to remove the polyps. Thus, many patients will require a second procedure, optical colonoscopy.

Virtual colonoscopy should, therefore, be considered primarily for patients with no suspicion of polyps or cancer, and for patients in whom optical colonoscopy or sedation may pose a risk.