

# What Are Colon Polyps?

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## OVERVIEW

Colon polyps are growths on the surface of the large intestine (colon and rectum) that can be benign (non-cancerous) or cancerous. The most common type is an adenoma, a benign growth that has the potential to become cancerous in the future. Another common type of polyp is the hyperplastic polyp, which typically does not have the potential to become cancerous. Polyps are very common in adults and usually do not cause any symptoms.



## What are the Causes of Colon Polyps?

Many factors can contribute to the development of colon polyps, but scientists are still working to identify all of them. Some risk factors include:

- ❖ Age
- ❖ Genetics- a family history of colon polyps or cancer
- ❖ Smoking
- ❖ Obesity
- ❖ Diet high in fat or red meat
- ❖ Diet low in fiber
- ❖ a history of inflammatory bowel disease (IBD)

## **Diagnosis of colon polyps: How are colon polyps diagnosed?**

The best way to determine if you have a polyp is to undergo a colonoscopy with your doctor. During a colonoscopy, the doctor can examine the colon for polyps and look for signs of inflammation or damage. However, if you're not comfortable with a colonoscopy or have other health concerns, your doctor may be able to determine if you have polyps with a simple stool test.

## **Treatment of colon polyps**

When a colon polyp is found during a colonoscopy, your doctor can remove it during the procedure. Occasionally, larger polyps may require surgical removal. If you are found to have a colon polyp, you may need more frequent colonoscopies to ensure that you have not developed more colon polyps.

Making certain lifestyle changes can decrease the risk of developing polyps in the future, including:

- ❖ Weight loss, if overweight
- ❖ Stop smoking
- ❖ Limit alcohol consumption
- ❖ Eat a high fiber, low-fat diet

Although colon polyps are usually benign, some types can develop into cancer. It's important to have regular colonoscopies so that any polyps can be detected and removed before they have a chance to turn into cancer. If you have any other risk factors for colon cancer, such as a family history of the disease, you may need to have more frequent exams.