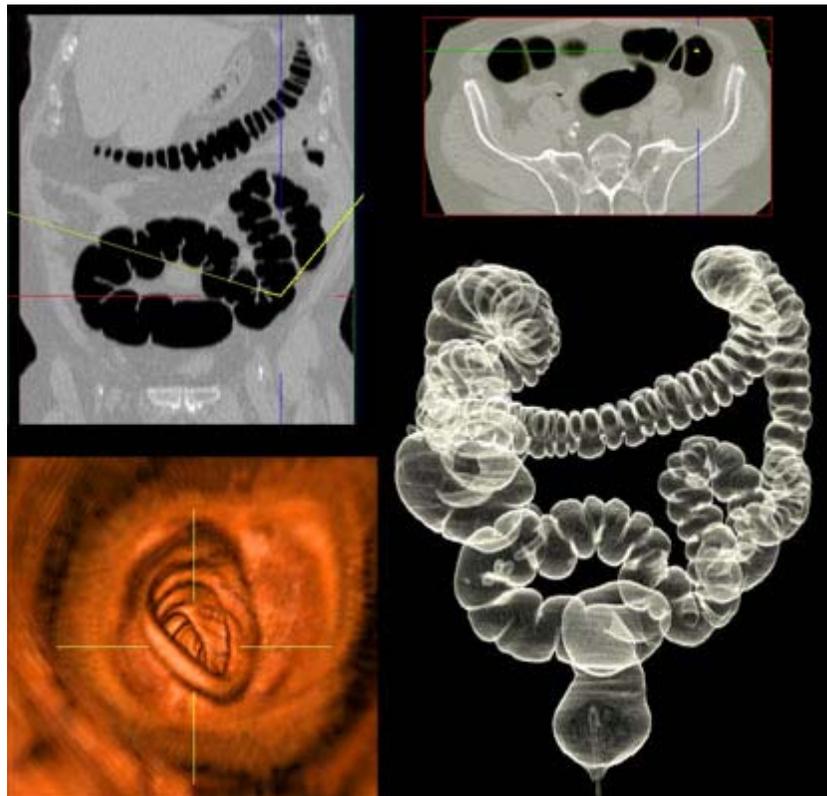




Diagnostic Imaging, Inc.

Patient Education

CT Colonography (*CT or Virtual Colonoscopy*)



What is CT Colonography?

CT Colonography, also known as CT or Virtual Colonoscopy, is a technique that enables doctors to examine the colon and see potentially cancerous lesions, without insertion of a camera, and without sedation. Advances in CT scanning technology and computer software have made these examinations possible.

Why is CT Colonography done?

Colon cancer is one of the leading causes of death in the United States. There are currently several methods of detecting colon cancer, including regular colonoscopy and barium enema. The American Cancer Society currently recommends that this type of examination be performed every 3-5 yrs. The goal of this exam is to try to detect colon cancer early, before it has had the chance to spread, and while it is potentially curable. CT Colonography provides an additional means of detecting these lesions.

How does it work?

The CT scanner will quickly take hundreds of pictures of your abdomen. These pictures will then be reconstructed by a computer to show the inner surface of your colon.

How do I prepare?

You will be given a preparation kit, which is essentially identical to the kit provided for barium enemas. Specific instructions are provided within the kit, but it generally includes both oral laxatives and suppositories, as well as dietary instructions for 24 to 48 hours preceding the exam. This preparation is extremely important in cleaning the colon, so its inner surface can be well visualized. You may take your regular medications as usual.

How is the exam performed?

- You should arrive 30 minutes before your exam is scheduled.
- You will initially be greeted by a CT scan technologist who will be performing the exam. He or she will ask questions about your medical history and the effectiveness of your preparation.

- You will have the opportunity to use the restroom before the exam begins.
- You will be taken into the CT room and instructed to lie on the table.
- A small tube will be inserted into your rectum, and air will be pumped into your colon by the CT technologist or radiologist. This step is necessary to expand the colon, and to make sure that all surfaces are well seen.
- You will be asked not to let the air out while the technologist performs the first scan, usually not more than 2 or 3 minutes. You will also be asked to hold your breath during the scan, usually about 15 to 20 seconds.
- Once the first scan has been performed, you will be asked to lie on the CT scanner table with your stomach down, and a small amount of additional air will be pumped in. A second scan will then be performed, similar to the first. Again, this step is necessary to ensure that all surfaces of the colon are well seen.
- Immediately following the exam, the tube will be removed, and you will have the opportunity to use the restroom again.
- You may resume a regular diet immediately following the exam.

What will I feel during the exam?

Most patients experience some degree of discomfort as the air is administered into the colon, usually cramping and mild abdominal pain. We attempt to minimize the amount of time that you experience any discomfort by performing the examination as quickly as possible. Most patients feel that the exam is less uncomfortable than a barium enema examination. It is likely to be more uncomfortable than regular colonoscopy, as most patients are sedated during that exam.

What will the examination show?

Once the examination is complete, and the computer has processed all of the images, one or two trained radiologists will examine the images. The radiologist is looking for polyps or masses that may be inside the colon, just as a gastroenterologist does during a regular colonoscopy. A great deal of research has been done about the appearance of these polyps and masses, and any polyps that appear suspicious will be reported. Not all polyps and masses are cancerous, and depending on the appearance of these lesions, you may need a follow-up CT Colonography, regular colonoscopy, or continued regular colon cancer surveillance. The doctor who ordered the examination will receive a report of the results and discuss the findings with you. Please note that no polyps can be removed during this exam – you would need a regular colonoscopy or surgery for any suspicious polyps to be removed.

What are the Risks and Benefits?

Benefits

- CT Colonography is a “minimally invasive” procedure, meaning that a tube is not placed through the entire length of the colon, as with a regular colonoscopy. This decreases the risk of damage to the colon.
- No sedation is administered, so you are free to leave immediately following the exam, without restrictions on activity.
- Abnormalities that may exist outside the colon can also be seen using CT Colonography.

Risks

- Though “minimally invasive,” there is still a small chance of damage to the colon while administering air.
- Despite good preparation and technique, a less than optimal examination might be obtained, and lesions could be missed in that setting. If that is the case, the radiologist may recommend a repeat exam or regular colonoscopy.
- There is some radiation exposure, but usually less than the exposure for a barium enema examination.

Where can I get more information?

There is a great deal of information about CT Colonography in the medical literature and on the internet. One particularly informative site is

Radiology info (http://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info.cfm?pg=ct_colo)

You should understand that there are a number of different ways to prepare for and perform this examination. We feel that our method is best suited to give our patients the best possible examination.