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Colon Polyp Patient Information Sheet

During your colonoscopy you were found to have colon polyps. This sheet is to help you understand a little about colon polyps and their significance.

What is a Polyp?

A polyp is an abnormal growth that comes from the inner lining of the colon. They can vary in size, shape and cell types. There are several types of polyps that occur in the colon. Typically, I can not tell which type you have simply by looking at it. Therefore I have to remove all polyps that are identified during your colonoscopy. This is called a biopsy and involves removing part or the entire polyp and sending the piece of tissue to a pathologist who then examines it under a microscope. It will take 3-5 days before I get the report back. Call my office in about 1 week and I should have the pathology report reviewed and be able to make any further recommendations to you at that time. Your report may show one of the following;

- 1- Hyperplastic polyps are benign and have little, if any, risk of developing into cancer.
- 2- Tubular adenomas, tubular-villous adenomas and villous adenomas are the most common type of polyps encountered. These are the kinds of polyps that if not removed may develop into colon cancer. Overall it is estimated that about 50% of these adenomas if left untreated will develop into a malignancy. Tubular adenomas are the least likely to turn cancerous while villous adenomas are the most likely to do so. These polyps grow slowly but the larger they become the more likely they are to turn cancerous.

What does a polyp look like?

Colon polyps are found in one of two shapes. Polyps on stems or stalks look like mushroom and are called *pedunculated*. When they grow directly onto the inner wall of the colon like a mole on your skin they are called *sessile* and are much more difficult to remove.

What are the symptoms of a polyp?

Polyps usually will not cause any symptoms. Occasionally they will bleed, cause a bowel obstruction or act as a lead point for an intussusception. Because they do not cause symptoms until they become malignant, it is important to screen all individuals for colon polyps.

What should be done about my polyps?

The most important thing is to find them in the first place, which we have just done. During the colonoscopy I have several methods of removing the polyps. Smaller polyps are usually biopsied and then the base is burned using cautery (electrical current). This destroys any polyp cells that may be left behind. Larger polyps are snared with a wire loop and then the base of the polyp is cauterized thus removing the polyp. Rarely, I may be unable to remove the entire polyp. This may be because of the size, location or shape of the polyp. If this is the case you may need a repeat colonoscopy in several months or surgical resection of that portion of your colon.

Do I need another colonoscopy?

The simple answer is yes. You can develop new polyps, one of the polyps that I removed may come back, and there is a possibility that I missed a polyp during your colonoscopy.

When should I have another colonoscopy?

This is a more difficult question. If only hyperplastic polyps were found then you will not need another colonoscopy for about seven years. For a variety of reasons (multiple polyps, villous adenomas, or poor bowel prep) I may recommend you have a follow up colonoscopy sooner than that. If I did not tell you when to have another colonoscopy at the time of this procedure then be sure to ask when you call for your pathology report.

- You should have a repeat colonoscopy in 7 years.
- You should have a repeat colonoscopy in _____ years.
- You should ask when you call for your pathology report when to have a repeat colonoscopy.

What can I do to prevent polyps from forming?

Unfortunately you cannot choose your parents which may be the biggest risk factor for developing colon polyps. Neither can you turn back the calendar, as people over fifty also have a greater risk of having colon polyps. Individuals who do not smoke and consume a high fiber, low fat diet have been shown to have the lowest risk of developing colon polyps. Adopting this type of lifestyle may reduce, but it will not eliminate, your risk of developing polyps.