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## COLON POLYP INFORMATION

### **What is a colon polyp?**

A colon polyp is a small clump of cells that forms on the lining of the colon. Most colon polyps are harmless. But, over time, some colon polyps can develop into colon cancer, which is often fatal when found in its later stages.

### **What is a pre-cancerous polyp?**

Pre-cancerous polyps have a risk of becoming cancer if allowed to grow and get larger. Pre-cancerous polyps are usually removed by colonoscopy.

**Most colon cancers start as a polyp, but certainly not all polyps turn into cancer, they only have a chance to.** For small adenomatous polyps this is rare – large dysplastic polyps have a greater potential of turning into cancer. Regardless, if your polyp has been removed, you will be fine.

### **Most Common Types of Colon Polyps:**

- **Inflammatory** colon polyps are mostly found in people with an inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), such as Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis. Inflammatory polyps are sometimes referred to as "false polyps", because these aren't polyps per se, but rather an inflammatory manifestation of IBD. These polyps are benign and are unlikely to become cancer.
- **Hyperplastic** polyps are defined by the activity of cells in the tissue mass. Hyperplasia ("fast growth") simply means that there is an abnormal increase in the number of cells resulting in the gross enlargement of a polyp. Despite the rapid growth, these polyps are considered to be at low risk of turning cancerous. (An enlarged prostate is another example of benign hyperplasia).
- **Adenomatous** polyps, or adenomas, make up about 70% of all polyps found in the colon. While adenomas can become cancerous, this process can typically take years. As opposed to hyperplastic polyps, adenomas are neoplastic. Neoplasia ("new growth") is a term used to describe an abnormal growth of cells that gradually lose the characteristics of normal cells. When neoplastic cells form into a mass, we refer to that as a tumor. A neoplasm can be benign, malignant, or something in between.
- **Villous adenoma** is a type of adenomatous polyp that has a greater potential of becoming cancerous. It is estimated that around 30% of villous adenomas will develop into a malignancy. These polyps often have cauliflower-like protrusions and may require surgery to remove.
- **Tubovillous adenoma** is a type of polyp that grows in the colon and other places in the gastrointestinal tract and sometimes in other parts of the body. These adenomas may become malignant (cancerous). TVAs are considered to have a higher risk of malignant transformation than tubular adenomas. The risk becomes higher if the TVA is allowed to grow.

Regardless of type, any polyp larger than one centimeter (1cm) should be removed.

Based on the results of your colonoscopy, your doctor will determine when, and how often the procedure should be repeated.