



Frequently Asked Question about Virtual Colonoscopy

Virtual Colonoscopy (CV) is a new method that allows doctors to look at the large bowel (colon) to detect polyps and cancers. Polyps are small growths in the colon that may become cancerous if they are not removed. Virtual Colonoscopy is a recently developed technique that uses a CT scanner and Virtual Reality software to look inside the body without having to insert a long tube (Conventional Colonoscopy) into the colon and without the need for sedation (an intravenous injection requiring 6-8 hours of restricted activity following the procedure) or without having to fill the colon with liquid barium/air (Double Contrast Barium Enema). Research performed at Boston University and elsewhere has shown that Virtual Colonoscopy is better able to see polyps than a Double Contrast Barium Enema and is nearly as accurate as Conventional Colonoscopy for polyps most likely capable of becoming cancerous. In addition, most patients report that the Virtual Colonoscopy technique is more comfortable than either Double Contrast Barium Enema or Conventional Colonoscopy.

Why is it having a VC important?

Colorectal cancer (CRC) is a leading cause of cancer-related death in the United States, second only to lung cancer.

Approximately 140,000 cases of colon cancer will be diagnosed in the U.S. this year and 60,000 patients will die of the disease. Colon cancer can be prevented if polyps are discovered and removed early. Tumors (masses of abnormal cells) take years to develop. Initially, a cell from the colon starts to multiply abnormally and forms a benign (non-cancerous) polyp that can remain harmless for a long time before becoming an aggressive cancer. Polyps, when detected, can be removed preventively. Nevertheless, individuals at greatest risk of developing colorectal cancer remain largely under screened. This is due, in part, to poor public awareness and acceptance of current screening techniques. In fact, 7 OUT OF 10 INDIVIDUALS FOR WHOM SCREENING IS INDICATED, WILL REFUSE TO UNDERGO COLON SCREENING for a multitude of reasons.

What are the current methods used to detect polyps?

There are several tests that are used to try and detect polyps. Several government agencies as well as the American Cancer Society recommend that patients undergo a test that allows the doctor to see the entire colon at age 50 and then every three to five years thereafter. Currently there are two accepted methods for seeing the entire colon: the Conventional Colonoscopy and the Double Contrast Barium Enema. Other tests like the Flexible Sigmoidoscope or Rigid Sigmoidoscope, which can only see a small portion of the large bowel (colon), are considered inferior tests.

Although the Double Contrast Barium Enema and Conventional Colonoscopy permit visualization of the entire colon, the sensitivity of Double Contrast Barium Enema is far from optimal and is uncomfortable both for patient and examiner. Conventional Colonoscopy is associated with increased risk and is costly. Conventional Colonoscopy is unable to see the entire colon in one out of ten people.



WASHINGTON IMAGING SERVICES

Frequently Asked Question about Virtual Colonoscopy

(continued)

In addition, Conventional Colonoscopy may cause an injury of the colon (tear or perforation) in one out of 1500 patients. Medication given into the vein (intravenous sedation) is usually required to make the exam bearable and therefore patients cannot resume normal activities immediately after the test. The introduction of a safe, noninvasive and effective method of detecting colorectal polyps and cancers will greatly improve the early detection of colon cancer while it can be easily treated.

How is it done?

Virtual Colonoscopy uses a state-of-the-art 16-slice Multi-detector Computed Tomography (MDCT or CAT scan) of the abdomen and pelvis. This allows radiologists (special physicians with advanced training in x-ray imaging) to create pictures on the computer that look similar to those seen by Conventional Colonoscopy. Patients need a cleansing preparation of their bowel prior to the test. The day of the test they come to our Bellevue Tower for their CT scan. The actual Virtual Colonoscopy procedure will begin by inserting a small flexible tube into the rectum, so that air can be introduced. A CT scan is then performed while patients lie comfortably on their back and then on their stomach. The total time required for the study is approximately 10-20 minutes. Because sedation is not required, patients are free to leave our CT center immediately without the need for observation or recovery. Patients can resume normal activities immediately after the procedure and can eat, work or drive without a delay. The radiologist will analyze the CT data to detect colon polyps or cancers. Your physician will receive a copy of your report within 48 hours.

Is it painful?

When air is introduced in the colon some patients experience minimal temporary abdominal cramping or "gas pains." A widely used intravenous injection to relax the bowel can also be given to help reduce the gas pains, but this is usually not necessary. Relaxing, by taking in slow deep breaths, will help to alleviate any discomfort.

When and how often do I need to have a test to screen for polyps?

Patients over 50 years old should be tested every 3-5 years with a Barium Enema, Conventional Colonoscopy, or Virtual Colonoscopy.

What is our Screening Referral Policy?

Washington Imaging Services recognizes the popularity that screening has achieved in the community and its availability on a self-referral basis. However, as ethical physicians we are obliged to offer services for which there is scientific basis and to refrain from advertising that plays upon the population's fears or is misleading.

For that reason, WIS offers our screening services to our patients with a referral request from their physician. We believe this best allows for an intelligent decision as to the value of any medical procedure selected.



1135 116th Ave, Suite 260, Bellevue, WA 98004

Phone: 425-688-0100, Fax: 425-454-8911

E-mail: info@washingtonimaging.com

For More Information: www.washingtonimaging.com