Instructions Following Colonoscopy

You have just had a colonoscopy. This is information about what to expect over the next week. Please call our office if you have severe or persistent abdominal pain, fever, or a bloody bowel movement. A doctor associated with our office will speak with you and decide on a course of action. If biopsies were taken from your colon or a polyp was removed, we usually request that you call your own doctor in about 10 days to obtain the results.

Bleeding: Bleeding may occur immediately after taking a biopsy or after removal of a polyp. You will have been informed if there was any bleeding at the time of the procedure. Although rare, the risk of bleeding may still be present up to 10 days after polypectomy, when the scab from the cauterized area falls off. A small amount of blood on the stool is not uncommon after colonoscopy, but the passage of an entirely bloody bowel movement should be immediately reported.

Pain: Sharp or persistent abdominal pain is uncommon after colonoscopy. If it occurs, please call our office. Many patients experience discomfort due to the air pumped into the colon during the procedure, but this usually subsides within a few hours.

The sedative medication injected into your arm vein may cause local swelling and discomfort, beginning 1 to 7 days later and last for several weeks. This occurs in about 1/100 patients and, although annoying, it is rarely serious. Please contact our office if you experience any swelling or pain that persists following your procedure.

Food: Your bowel preparation has emptied your intestinal tract. We suggest avoidance of any heavy meals today. If your stomach does not feel right, the next meal should be light—such as eggs, cereal and toast. Do not drink alcohol for 8 hours. Regular food may be started tomorrow.

Activities: The sedation you received will make you less alert than normal. Do not make any major decisions today. You may resume normal activities tomorrow. Do not drive a car until tomorrow.

Medications: You may resume all medications immediately after colonoscopy, but if a polyp was removed, your doctor will instruct you when to restart blood thinners.

Next Bowel Movement: Since your colon is completely clean, do not expect any bowel activity for 2 to 3 days.

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