

If the idea of getting something stuck up your butt freaks you out, consider the size of a typical scope. Are your poops larger than that? I sure hope so! Your butthole can handle something this tiny without any problem.

LIGHTS! → **ACTION!**
(where the surgical tools go in and out)

Typical diameter of 1.0-1.2 cm, i.e. smaller than a dime!

After everything is over you will find yourself in recovery, probably feeling a little groggy, while various nurses and techs remove your I.V. and do a bunch of mysterious paperwork.

DON'T OPERATE HEAVY MACHINERY TODAY.
Oh no, my bulldozer...

Your doctor will stop by to let you know what they found, if anything, and recommend when you should next get a colonoscopy.

DUDE, WE TOLD YOU NOT TO EAT POPCORN.

Again, for most people who, unlike me, suck at farming polyps, this will be in 5 or 10 **years**.

YOU MIGHT ONLY HAVE TO DO THIS 3 TIMES IN YOUR ENTIRE LIFE!

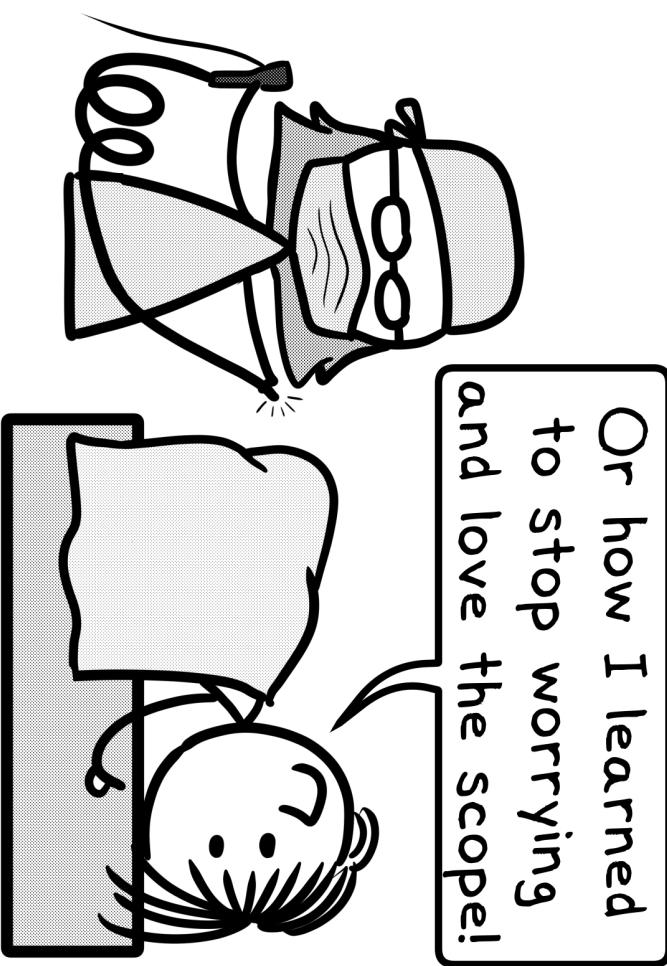
After that there's only one more important thing to be decided...

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO EAT?
ANYTHING

Postscript: If you had polyps removed you might have some mild bleeding when you go to the bathroom for a day or two. This is totally normal.

Confession time: I desperately want you to get a colonoscopy. I know many people who have lost friends and relatives at shockingly young ages to colorectal cancer and those numbers are only going up.

You can't do much to actively prevent most types of cancer. You just wait for them to show up and then react. But colonoscopies not only screen for cancer but also actively help to prevent it from developing in the first place. How immensely cool is that?



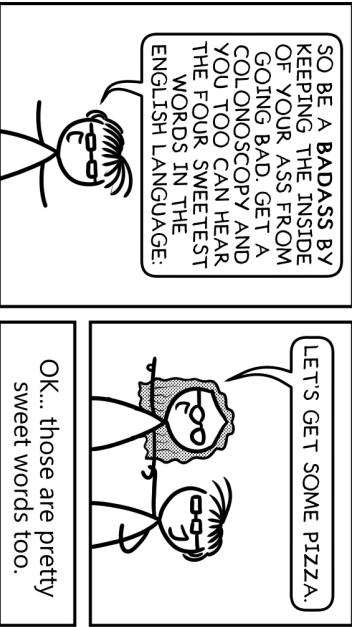
Fun and Polyps!

A Beginner's Guide to Colonoscopies

by Mya L. Gosling

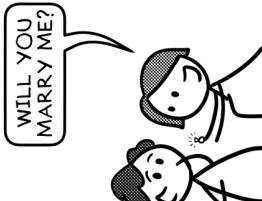
DISCLAIMER: I am not a doctor in any way, shape, or form. The information in this comic is a reflection of my own experiences and understanding of the conditions and procedures discussed, but should absolutely not substitute for talking with a qualified medical professional. Don't take medical advice from stick figures.

Are colonoscopies fun? Eh... not really. I'm trying really hard to sell you on them, but I have to admit they are unpleasant and inconvenient. But they are also very safe, relatively painless and might just save your life. Isn't your life worth sitting on the toilet for a couple hours every few years?

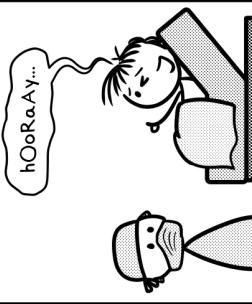


OK... those are pretty sweet words too.

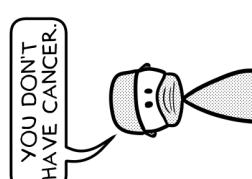
The four sweetest words in the English language are:



Those are the sweet words I heard when I woke up after my first colonoscopy.

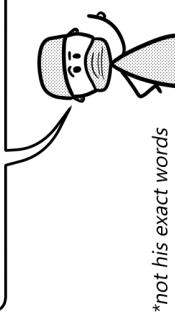


OK, those are pretty sweet, but the ones I'm actually talking about today are:



The doctor followed them up with a moderately less poetic pronouncement:

IT'S A GOOD THING YOU CAME IN WHEN YOU DID. YOU'VE GOT A \$#!%TON* OF POLYPS.



A **colonoscopy** is a medical procedure that screens for, among other things, colorectal cancer (CRC), which is the fourth most common type of cancer in the United States.

While mostly found in older individuals, in recent years CRC has become scarily more prevalent in younger populations, for unknown reasons.

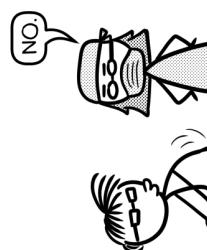
As an elder millennial I was still several years shy of 45, the age that the American Cancer Society recommends people start routine colonoscopy screenings. I didn't need one... did I?

Overall I am in great shape! I don't have any pre-existing conditions or lifestyle factors that would have increased my risk of developing CRC. I am fit and trim — you can see my abs if you squint — I exercise regularly, I eat reasonably healthily, I don't smoke or drink.

FAMILY
HISTORY
OF
POLYPS

I don't have diabetes or an inflammatory bowel disease or any genetic syndromes. There was just one tiny warning sign...

Let's face it: colonoscopies are not very glamorous. Someone sticks a camera up your butt, and not in a fun, OnlyFans kind of way.



This is where the anesthesia comes into play. If this is your very first time getting "knocked out," this will most likely be the part that freaks you out the most. I was absolutely **terrified** at the very idea of involuntarily losing consciousness.

GENERAL ANESTHESIA

(I had propofol)

The I.V. site may burn a bit when they inject you, but then you will gently fall asleep within a minute. You will not feel anything, you will not be aware of anything. You'll just have a lovely nap.



CONSCIOUS SEDATION

(I had fentanyl)

You will feel slightly buzzed and might drift in and out of consciousness. You might feel some mild pinching if they remove any polyps but — and this is the fun part — you will not care. It will all just seem kinda cool.

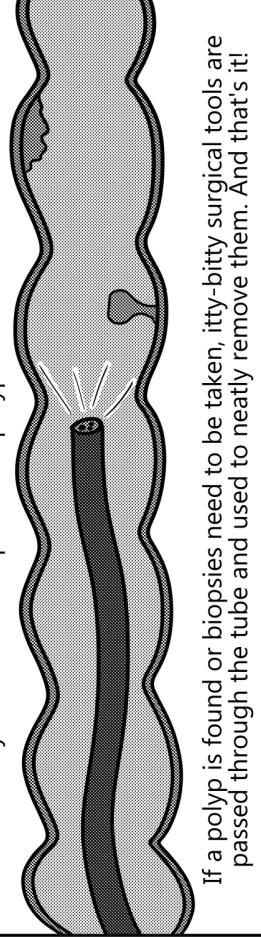


NO ANESTHESIA

You will feel slightly buzzed and might drift in and out of consciousness. You might feel some mild pinching if they remove any polyps but — and this is the fun part — you will not care. It will all just seem kinda cool.



My friend reports you will feel some cramping, like you need to poop, when they maneuver the scope around the bends of your colon. She didn't feel anything when they removed polyps and enjoyed seeing her colon on TV.



*There are other options to **detect** CRC besides colonoscopies, including fecal and imaging tests, but colonoscopies are the **gold standard** in not only detecting but also **preventing** CRC.

I think the part I hate most about this whole process is right here, when I've finished the prep but still need to wait until it's time to leave. I'm tired from not sleeping well, I'm hungry from not eating for over 24 hours, and I'm starting to get a bit anxious about everything.

THE PROCEDURE

a.k.a.

"The End Is Literally In Sight"

Or

"Look Up My Butt"

I GENERALLY DEAL WITH THIS BY WANDERING AIMLESSLY AROUND THE HOUSE PERIODICALLY SHOUTING "I'M TIRED!" OR "I'M HUNGRY!" OR "I'M ANXIOUS" OUT LOUD LIKE A DYSREGULATED TODDLER. BUT I KNOW THAT FEELING THIS WAY MEANS THAT THE END IS IN SIGHT!

Colonoscopies are usually performed with some type of anesthesia, so you will need to find a responsible adult to escort you to and from your appointment.

If you can't find any responsible adults, a friend will do.

SO CAN I FILM YOU WAKING UP ALL DRUGGED OUT IN RECOVERY?

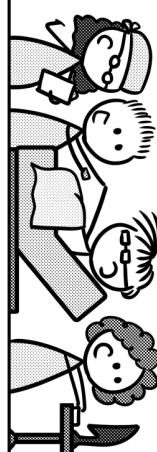


When you go back for your appointment, you will have to change into one of those atrocious hospital gowns that open in the back.



You'll then get settled in a bed while a steady stream of people take your vital signs, ask you questions about your health and meds, and check you out for anesthesia. Let them know if you have any concerns. You deserve to feel safe.

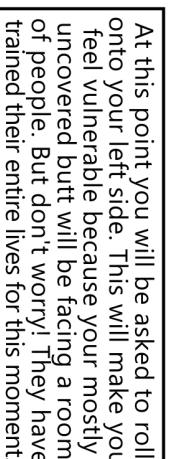
ARE YOU DOING OK?
YES I JUST DON'T WANT TO WATCH! LALALALA!



Someone will also put an I.V. in your arm. This is probably the most painful part of the colonoscopy experience, but it doesn't last very long.

At this point you will be asked to roll onto your left side. This will make you feel vulnerable because your mostly uncovered butt will be facing a room of people. But don't worry! They have trained their entire lives for this moment.

(DON'T LOOK AT MY BUTT!)

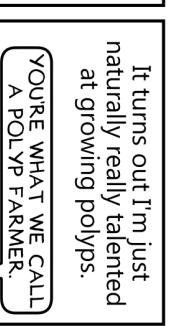
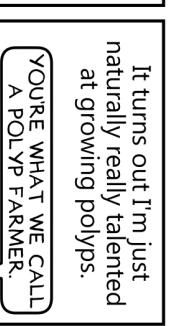
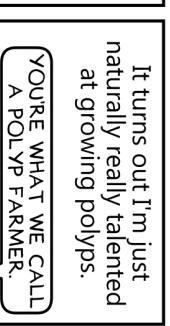
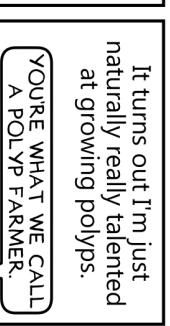


Getting a colonoscopy early and discovering I had a \$#%>-ton of polyps alerted me to the fact that I was at high-risk for developing cancer.

WHAT ABOUT THE X-GENE?
NO, YOU ARE NOT AN X-MAN

WHAT A LAME SUPERPOWER...

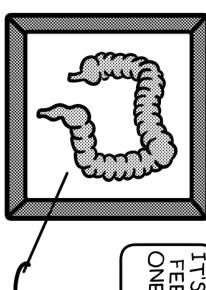
YOU'RE WHAT WE CALL A POLYP FARMER.



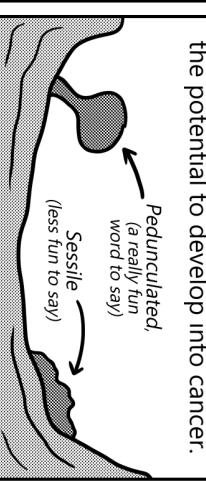
It's tempting to ignore polyps because they don't cause any symptoms and can take up to ten years to develop into cancer...

...but once you *do* start having symptoms that generally means cancer has already developed, and you're in for some difficult, life-altering treatment.

Colonoscopies are awesome because they can find and remove polyps before they even think about turning cancerous! (NOT TODAY, POLYP!)



IT'S ABOUT FIVE FEET LONG, OR ONE AND A HALF HOBBITS.

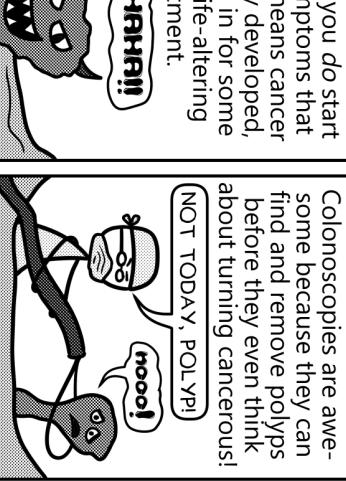
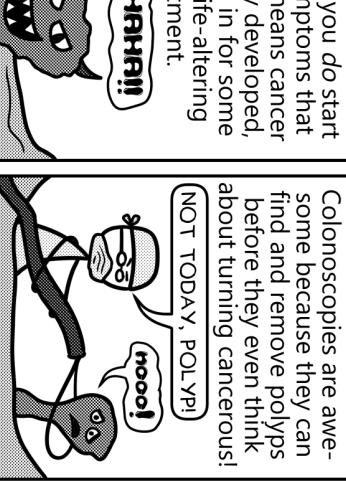
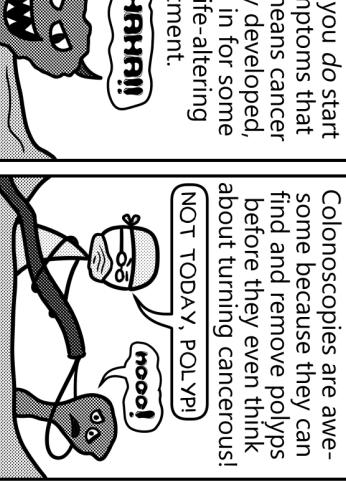


Unfortunately, because we can't have nice things, the lining of your colon will sometimes develop tissue growths called **polyps**. There are different kinds, many of which are harmless, but some have the potential to develop into cancer.

Colonoscopies are awesome because they can find and remove polyps before they even think about turning cancerous! (NOT TODAY, POLYP!)

Pedunculated, (a really fun word to say)

(less fun to say)



You will be wheeled into the procedure room, which generally gives off a vibe of controlled chaos, and will be asked to sign an "informed consent" form saying you are aware of the risks of the procedure. This is always a bit scary because one of the listed risks is DEATH, but let's stay calm... colonoscopies are very low-risk. Your chances of suffering a severe complication are around 1 to 3 in 1000. Your chances of developing colorectal cancer? Around 1 in 22. Even Han Solo would appreciate those odds.

This is also when you will make what I lovingly call your "poop juice" by filling your jug o' fun with water and shaking it until all the powder has dissolved.

LIME JELLO IS ALWAYS
RECOMMENDED, BUT I
ATE TOO MUCH OF IT
MY FIRST TIME AROUND
AND NOW I JUST CAN'T
STAND IT. TRY IT FOR
YOURSELF, THOUGH!

The day before your procedure you will stop eating solid foods and switch to a **clear** liquid diet. I like broth, various teas (black — no milk!) and popsicles.

A cartoon illustration of a doctor with a speech bubble. The doctor has a round face, short hair, and is wearing a white coat and a stethoscope. The speech bubble contains the text: "...BUT SINCE I HAVE IT I'M GOING TO SHARE WITH YOU MY INSIGHTS INTO THE ENTIRE PROCESS. WELCOME TO COLONOSCOPY 101!"

A cartoon illustration of a man with a speech bubble. The man has dark hair, a mustache, and is wearing a suit and tie. The speech bubble contains the text: "I'VE ALREADY HAD TWO AND A HALF COLONO-SCOPES, WHICH MAKES ME A PATIENT-LEVEL EXPERT ON THEM. IT'S NOT AN EXPERTISE I PARTICULARLY WANTED TO HAVE...".

Most people will have few or no polyps, and will have to get routine colonoscopies only once every 5 or 10 years.

THE PREP

HUGE DISCLAIMER

All this information is from my own personal experience. Your medical providers might very well do things differently and that's OK! For the love of God, follow their instructions instead of the addled ramblings of someone who can't even draw noses properly!

After your colonoscopy referral you will get a prescription for your "prep". This is the stuff that will clean out your colon for the procedure.

THE PREP

a.k.a.

"The Pooping"

Or

"I Can't Believe Some People Cleanse Their Colons for Fun"

Your prep might vary, but a common one is polyethylene glycol, or PEG. It comes as powder in a big gallon jug.

I CALL THIS THE JUG O' FUN!
YOU HAVE A VERY DISTORTED IDEA OF WHAT'S "FUN"...

A cartoon illustration of a small, round, brown object with a black cord attached to it, resembling a bomb or a device.

You'll also get a schedule outlining when to stop taking various meds and what foods to avoid in the days leading up to your procedure. Pay attention to this. If you've got too many indigestible tomato seeds or popcorn hulls floating around in your colon, guess what?

DON'T TELL ME,
I HAVE TO DO IT—

Tell your doctor if you have constipation and they might give you something a bit stronger. The *last* thing you want is to show up on the day and be told you have to do it *all over again* because your colon isn't clean enough.



REMEMBER, THE PENALTY
FOR NOT TAKING YOUR PREP
INSTRUCTIONS SERIOUSLY IS
HAVING TO DO EVERYTHING
ALL OVER AGAIN. DON'T
PLAY AROUND. TELL YOUR
DOCTOR IF YOUR PREP
ISN'T WORKING FOR YOU!*

MY POOPENING SET-UP

SMALL TABLE

*Somewhere to place
your drinks, phone, etc.*

TABLET/PHONE STAND So you can watch stuff. I used this time to get caught up on all the Marvel content I've missed. Don't forget a charge

HEADPHONES So you can hear your music over the bathroom fan.

The "peeing through your butthole" phase is GREAT because it means you are one giant step towards everything being OVER!

A cartoon illustration of a man with a large head and a worried expression. He is looking upwards and to the right. A speech bubble originates from his mouth, containing the text "ABOUT FRICKIN' TIME..." in a bold, sans-serif font.