

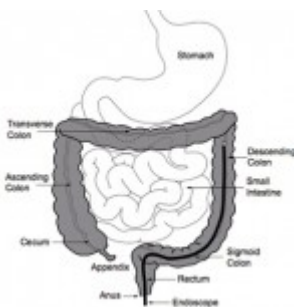
Colonoscopies – a necessary cleansing

By Kathryn Reed

Am I experiencing any pain?

Well, technically no – especially when they are hunger pangs and not hunger pain. And the gagging had stopped. And the baby wipes, as suggested, were not needed.

Oh, the joys of having a colonoscopy.



As Dr. Dan Norman said to me when he walked into the room, “So, we have your Dad to thank for you being here.”

Yes, Dad’s bout with colon cancer way back when is the reason I have colonoscopies before the recommended age of 50. As much as they are not on my list of Top 10 things I enjoy, it was early detection that saved my Dad and had him with us for years after the last chemo treatment.

As unpleasant as the prep is for this procedure, I will gladly endure all that it entails if it means finding something early that can be treated, instead of the alternative – which could be a nasty death.

My Dad never had symptoms. It was through his regular colonoscopy that a cancerous polyp was detected. Fortunately, I have not had polyps in the two colonoscopies I’ve had. My sister, Tami, has – all non-cancerous. They are removed immediately.

It's just one of those exams to add to the list of preventive health care measures – like regular mammograms and pap smears for women, and prostate exams for men.

Yes, it's hard to sometimes justify the money for these “elective” procedures when finances are tight. But think about what would happen if you were diagnosed with a serious illness in its advanced stage. What would your family do without you? Is it less expensive for the test today, than the treatment down the road?

Nothing about a colonoscopy is fun except for telling stories with other people who have had one. It's drinking the liquid the night before that is the worst. It's designed to clean out the intestinal system – and boy does it.

Other than the large bruise and bump from where the IV needle was put in my arm, there is no memory of the actual colonoscopy. I barely remember getting dressed. (The first time I had to ask my driver if I was dressed when she showed up because I didn't remember how my clothes got back on.)

Anesthetics throw me for a loop, so I was out all night. But I slept knowing, as my sister in the oncology field says, knowing I'm a perfect ---.