

Barton 1 of 2 hospitals offering hydro preps for colonoscopies

By Kathryn Reed

Air vs. water. Super bad tasting liquid vs. tablets in water. Spending the night in the bathroom vs. sleeping.

Those are some of the differences between the traditional prep for a colonoscopy and using hydrotherapy.

Hydrotherapy has been around for a number of years, but used mostly in the wellness community as a cleansing mechanism for the intestinal system.



Susan Frailey and Dan Norman of Barton Health explain how the hydrotherapy machine works. Photos/Kathryn Reed

Barton Memorial Hospital this spring became the second hospital in the country to offer this procedure. The other is in Connecticut. And there are four freestanding endoscopy

centers that use is.

“It’s a standard colonoscopy with a better prep,” explained Susan Frailey, registered nurse at Barton.

While the procedure is new to Barton, Frailey has performed more than 2,000 of them – mostly through a business she used to have in Meyers. Her clients were going to her for digestive health.

One day Barton anticipates the wellness components of hydrotherapy to be part of a larger program it envisions developing.

For now, Dan Norman is the only doctor at Barton using this method. Of the three docs who do colonoscopies Norman is the main guy, having performed more than 40,000 endoscopic procedures in the last 30 years. The two others do a few colonoscopies each month.

Besides having the testimony of Frailey, a study presented to the annual American College of Gastroenterology in 2006 convinced Norman offering an alternative to the Golytely and Fleets Phosphasoda preparations made sense. The latter has recently been pulled from use because of patient deaths.

Anyone who has ingested Golytely knows the taste and subsequent flushing of the colon makes for a long, horrible night that entails being near a bathroom.

Randy Watson, one of the first people to have the hydro prep at Barton, is a believer in it. His first colonoscopy was with the drinks and air prep.

“With the hydrotherapy I really didn’t feel too much. You get a feeling of fullness,” the Zephyr Cove resident told *Lake Tahoe News*. “It was nothing like you would imagine. It was a very sterile, clean situation.”



The hydrotherapy machine.

And no smell involved.

A little at-home prep is required, but nothing like the horrible gallons of mix of Golytely. People may eat a light breakfast the day before, drink three packets of the Miralax to loosen the stool, and sleep through the night.

What the hydro part entails is arriving at the hospital about two hours before the colonoscopy. The water cleansing is about 45 minutes – the rest is paperwork, admitting and sitting around.

A tube is inserted into the rectum, warm controlled water is put in, and the colon is massaged to release the contents. The flushing is done three to four times to make sure the colon is clean.

A clear panel on the machine that is attached to a wall allows Frailey to know if another flushing is needed.

Then the regular colonoscopy is done, where the interior of the small and large bowels are examined for polyps.

Norman, in his limited use of the hydrotherapy, said it's producing as clean of a colon as the air prep. He foresees doing a blind study at Barton to measure one procedure against the other so more clinical documentation can be added for the medical community to get educated about the procedure.

Norman said it's the lack of knowledge about this option that is keeping people from doing it. It costs the patient about \$100, whereas the Golytely is a little more than \$60. Neither is covered by insurance even though one is needed before a colonoscopy can be performed.

Norman is hoping the hydrotherapy method will get more people thinking about colonoscopies – a procedure that should be done starting at age 50 and then every 10 years for the average person.

This preventative procedure is the main test for colon cancer. Each year about 100,000 people in the United States are diagnosed with colon cancer and another 40,000 with rectal cancer.