

POLYPECTOMY

1. PURPOSE

To standardise the methods of care for patients who are undergoing polypectomy.

Polyps are growths on the intestinal mucosa and stomach, and are mostly benign in nature. If left untreated and allowed to become very large, some polyps (adenomas) can degenerate and become malignant.

It has in fact been shown that the majority of malignant intestinal tumours derive from polyps (adenomas) that were benign to start with.

For this reason, it is necessary to remove polyps in the stomach and intestine, an operation which nowadays can be performed endoscopically rather than surgically, as was the case in the past.

2.1 Procedure

Through a small flexible tube with a camera or lenses (optical fibres) at its tip, and equipped with its own light, which is introduced from the mouth (gastroscopy) or rectum (colonoscopy), the doctor performing the examination may see the polyp or polyps.

Polyps may be pedunculated or broad-based.

Pedunculated polyps can be removed easily in one piece by severing the pedicle at the base with a special loop-shaped electrical scalpel (fig.1).

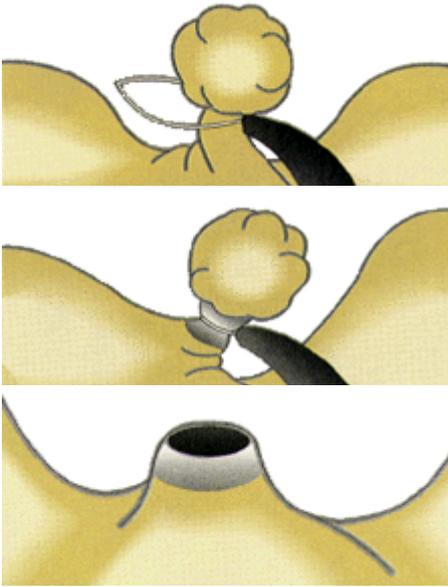


Figure 1

In the case of those with a wide base, especially if the polyp itself is large, it may be necessary to remove them piece-by-piece, in which case it may take more than one session to remove them completely (Fig. 2).

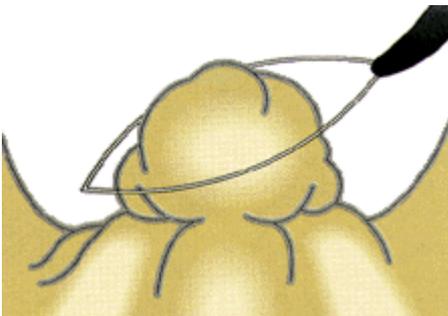


Figure 2

A laser may sometimes be used to burn the base of large polyps. It is extremely important to completely remove the polyp to prevent it from growing back.

For more information about laser therapy, please see the registration form.

2.1 Preparation

Polypectomy requires fasting for at least 6/8 hours. If the examination is scheduled for the morning, therefore, fasting from the night before is recommended, whereas when it is scheduled in the afternoon, a light breakfast in the morning is permitted.

Dental prostheses should be removed prior to the examination.

If you take medications on a regular basis, they will normally be taken also on the day of the examination. Oral rehydration solutions (antacids, sucralfate) should be avoided, however, as they can obstruct vision, making it difficult to carry out the examination.

2.2 Complications

Polypectomy is a safe procedure.

It is necessary, however, that the clotting ability of the patient's blood be normal. A blood test will be required to verify it.

The patient must also advise the doctor about medications that are being taken (anticoagulants, antiaggregants such as aspirin, or anti-inflammatory drugs) that may modify the blood's clotting ability.

The incidence of complications deriving from polypectomy is relatively low. The main complications are bleeding at the site where the polyp was removed and perforation, which are more frequent when removing large polyps.

Both of these complications can be resolved either with medical treatment or endoscopically, and surgery will be necessary only in certain cases.