

## **The Colonoscopy: A Grand Rite of Passage**

For those of you who have never ventured forth into the vast unknown – through the peaks and valleys, twists and turns, the byways and winding paths of that stretch of territory known as the intestines, I am here to say, you don't know what you're missing.

The Colonoscopy, one of life's most mysterious adventures, is an invasive procedure that everyone who has experienced it can't stop talking about. That's because they are so proud that they lived through it they feel compelled to share it with others. Talk to anyone who has succumbed and they will be eager to discuss their colonoscopy ad nauseum. And, if your friends don't get to you first, your physician is guaranteed to bring up this subject every chance he or she gets.

My doctor, whom I admire and revere, never misses the opportunity to catch me when she can. At my last office visit she inquired: "so, did you make the appointment for your colonoscopy yet?" Such questions are usually followed by a ten-second moment of silence so the patient can collect him/herself and muster up enough courage to reply: "I haven't gotten around to it yet."

This is only one in a series of pat answers, among them:

"I'm giving it some serious thought."

"I'm psyching myself up."

"I don't go in for that sort of thing"

Or my recent answer which I told my doctor: "I would rather hang upside down by my fingernails over a bed of rattlesnakes than have a Colonoscopy."

To which she replied in her erudite and medically savvy demeanor:

"Just do it."

In the end, like the Nike ad says: "doing it" whipped me into shape.

The first big step is making the actual appointment. This requires first popping a Valium and downing a half bottle of wine en route to that one necessary goal: picking up the phone and getting the words out of your mouth: "I'd like to schedule an appointment for a colonoscopy."

"Like" is not exactly the right word. "Forced" is more like it. If luck is with you, the person on the other end, who has taken a course in Colonoscopy 101 is skilled in such matters. Sensing your apprehension you will be shown a modicum of empathy in handling this delicate verbal exchange.

"We have an opening in two weeks," I was told.

“An *opening*?”

“Sorry, wrong word. The doctor will be pleased to see you in two weeks so he can insert a six foot tube inside your body cavity. But...”

I hung on her very word.

“You won’t feel a thing.”

“Of course I won’t,” I say. That’s because I will have fainted as soon as I enter the building.”

“What I mean,” the receptionist says, “is you’ll be given conscious sedation so that you won’t know what hit you.”

This leaves me with only one question: “what happens before I won’t remember? What about that small window of reality when I am fully aware of what is going on?”

“Trust me,” she says, “the worst part of the Colonoscopy is the prep. Once you get through that it’s a walk in the park.”

Allow me to digress. The prep is that twenty-four hour stretch of time where you are not allowed to eat solid food but can enjoy the pleasure of consuming as much liquid refreshment as you wish. In fact, you are required to drink 64-ounces of any clear beverage of your choice into which is mixed a magic potion known as Miralax, which in a matter of minutes, will remove every internal organ in your body.

My beverage of choice was Welch’s white grape juice of which I consumed an 8-ounce glass every thirty minutes until the bottle was depleted.

I am happy to report I did not drown. Instead I was resuscitated by that long tube which I believe bypassed my tonsils and adenoids and made it all the way up to my eyeballs so that for a week I had double vision, a side effect, though not common, under rare circumstances could be expected.

The good news is, I got through the prep and was on the table bright and early the next morning. And, I didn’t remember a thing except for the doctor who smiled at me and seemed unusually perky, probably because he wasn’t the one on the other end of the tube.

Bottom Line: with the Colonoscopy “behind” me, I can now, with utmost authority say, it was a walk in the park: I didn’t remember anything. The bad news is: I now have a phobic fear of long windy objects including my garden hose. Chances are I will never again in this lifetime

drink a glass of Welch's white grape juice no matter how thirsty I am. Doing so might render disastrous results.

Now that I am a full-fledged graduate and received my Colonoscopy diploma, I can't stop talking about it. I've been after my husband, Mark for several weeks to give it a shot.

"You won't get me in there with a ten foot pole," he said.

I haven't the heart to tell him that's exactly what he could be facing.