

# Polyps: Types, Diagnostic Methods and Treatment Approaches

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## Description

Polyps are abnormal tissue growths that can develop in various parts of the body, such as the colon, stomach and nasal passages. While most polyps are benign and not cancerous, some have the potential to evolve into cancer over time. Understanding polyps, including their types, risk factors and management strategies, is important for maintaining health and preventing serious diseases. Polyps are protrusions from a mucosal membrane, which can vary in size and form. They are classified based on their location and microscopic appearance. In the colon and rectum, polyps are particularly significant because some can progress to colorectal cancer if not detected and removed early. There are several types of polyps. Adenomatous polyps are the most common in the colon and rectum and are considered precursors to colorectal cancer due to their potential to become malignant over time. Hyperplastic polyps are generally small with a lower risk of cancer; they are often found in the colon and are usually benign, but if they occur in large numbers or alongside other types of polyps, further investigation may be necessary.

### Sessile serrated adenomas

Sessile Serrated Adenomas (SSAs) are flat polyps that can resemble hyperplastic polyps but are associated with a higher risk of colorectal cancer and can be more challenging to detect. Juvenile polyps, which are common in children, are typically benign and occur mainly in the gastrointestinal tract, particularly in the rectum. They often resolve on their own but may need removal if they cause symptoms or complications. In many cases, polyps do not cause symptoms, particularly in their early stages. When symptoms do appear, they may include rectal bleeding, abdominal pain, changes in bowel habits, or mucus in the stool. Due to the often asymptomatic nature of polyps,

regular screening is essential for early detection. Risk factors for developing polyps include increasing age, especially over 50, a family history of polyps or colorectal cancer and genetic conditions such as Familial Adenomatous Polyposis (FAP) or Lynch syndrome. Smoking and obesity are lifestyle issues and a diet high in red or processed meats, may also increase the risk. Screening for polyps is typically conducted using methods such as colonoscopy, which allows for direct visualization and removal of polyps using a flexible tube with a camera. Flexible sigmoidoscopy is similar but examines only the rectum and lower colon. Stool tests, including Fecal Occult Blood Tests (FOBT) and Fecal Immunochemical Tests (FIT), can detect hidden blood in the stool, suggesting the presence of polyps or cancer.

### Management of polyps

Management of polyps generally involves their removal and ongoing surveillance to monitor for recurrence. The treatment approach depends on the type, size and number of polyps, as well as individual risk factors. Polyps can be removed during a colonoscopy using specialized tools, a minimally invasive procedure usually performed under sedation. Larger polyps or those that cannot be removed endoscopically may require surgical intervention. Preventive measures include regular screening, especially for those at higher risk of polyps or colorectal cancer. Adopting a healthy lifestyle that incorporates a healthy diet full of fruits, vegetables and fiber and avoiding smoking and excessive alcohol consumption, can also help reduce the risk of polyp development and progression. Overall, polyps serve as important indicators of potential health issues, particularly in the gastrointestinal tract. Early detection through regular screening and effective management are essential for preventing the progression of polyps to cancer. Understanding the various types of polyps, their risk factors and preventive strategies can significantly improve health outcomes and reduce the risk of colorectal cancer.