

## How important are preventive medical checkups?

### The significance of colonoscopy screenings

Just like regular gynaecological examinations, colorectal cancer screenings are of great significance in preventive medicine.

A **colorectal carcinoma** (colon/rectal cancer) is the **second most fatal type of cancer** in Europe with an incidence of 20 (cases per 100,000 persons per year). In Austria more than **5000 new cases are diagnosed each year. Men and women are equally affected.** After the age of 40, the incidence of colorectal cancer doubles every 10 years; most cases occur in people aged 60 to 70. However, the number of younger people diagnosed with this tumour entity is steadily increasing.

With some rare exceptions, colorectal cancer develops from **adenomatous polyps** (polyps with cellular alterations, dysplasias). **Adenomas** grow slowly on the intestinal mucosa over many years. According to the current state of knowledge, adenomas do not develop from hyperplastic polyps, which are completely benign, but are an independent disease and **pre-cancerous condition**. Over a period of approx. ten years, they develop into a malignant tumour (invasive carcinoma, cancer) in the so-called "**adenoma-carcinoma sequence**". This means that on average patients have 10 years to have an adenoma removed before developing colorectal cancer.

The fact that a pre-cancerous condition exists for about 10 years before an invasive carcinoma develops is a unique constellation and shows the **significance of colorectal cancer screenings**. Considering the fact that **adenomas are found in over 30 per cent of the general population over the age of 50**, this is of course a very common condition that concerns one third of the Austrian population over the age of 50. The detection and **removal of adenomas** by a skilled endoscopist **prevents colorectal cancer** and protects the health of the people concerned.

Adenoma removal is a simple procedure in most cases and is performed during the **colonoscopy**. All my patients undergoing colonoscopy are under **sedation**, i.e. a very mild, so-called "twilight" anaesthesia. The examination is therefore **completely painless** and most patients **sleep through the entire procedure**. There is no need to worry as this sedation is **no "real" anaesthesia**. The patient is in a kind of half-sleep and basically fully conscious.

Colonoscopies are recommended for all healthy **men over the age of 45** and **women over the age of 50** who have no symptoms and no familial predisposition. If symptoms such as stool irregularities, blood in the stool, abdominal pain etc. occur, an examination should be performed without delay, regardless of the patient's age. If you have family members with cancer (colorectal cancer, breast cancer, uterine cancer) I will be pleased to provide advice on your risk and the best time for a preventive screening.

#### **Regular colonoscopies save lives!**

I will be pleased to arrange an appointment and offer you a thorough consultation about the appropriate time for a colonoscopy, your personal risk and the procedure itself.