**Patient Information Leaflet**

Polyps are small growths of the inner lining of the bowel. They appear like a little protrusion from the inside of the bowel and sometimes flat or even depressed making them difficult to identify. They are common and seen in around 20% of the adult population. The vast majority of polyps are quite harmless, but some polyps have the potential to become a cancer. However, this is a slow process and thankfully most polyps never turn cancerous. Due to the risk of polyps becoming cancerous, it’s important to remove them. The aim here is to hopefully prevent a bowel cancer.

There are 3 types of polyps:

* Adenomas. – most common, and are benign
* Hyperplastic – common but have no implications
* Malignant – cancer inside a polyp

Symptoms

More than 90% of polyps produce no symptoms or signs and are discovered during sigmoidoscopy or colonoscopy.  Some polyps particularly the larger ones may cause bleeding, diarrhoea, mucous discharge or anaemia.

Diagnosis

Generally, polyps are diagnosed during a colonoscopy or sigmoidoscopy (only for polyps in the left colon) being done for change in bowel habits, bleeding or other symptoms.

The gold standard test for diagnosing polyps is a colonoscopy or sigmoidoscopy. The larger ones can be diagnosed on a CT scan, specifically a CT colonography.

Treatment

Almost all polyps can be removed at colonoscopy. The polyp can be cauterised or snared with a wire using electric current; this does not hurt.  The polyp is then sent for pathological assessment to identify the type and presence of cancer.

Sometimes the larger polyps cannot by removed by colonoscopy techniques and may need an operation.

Follow-up

If your polyp is of a certain size or type, you may be at risk of developing further polyps in the future. Hence the British Society of Gastroenterology recommends repeat colonoscopy at various intervels ranging from 6 months to 5 years depending on the type, size and number of polyps. This is called surveillance and the aim here is to identify new polyps way before they become cancer.

What are the next steps?

If you think you have this condition or any of these symptoms, you will need to seek

medical advice. If you have private medical care or wish to pay to see a consultant:

Take this factsheet along to your own GP and request a referral:

For more information or to make an appointment: Contact the Yorkshire Colorectal Clinic on 0113 2185931 or email liz.power1@nhs.net