

Creating a Colorful Colon Health Reminder

Helpful Materials

- Five pipe cleaners for each participant
- Awakening Choices colon health booklet for each participant
- What's the Big Deal? colon health movie

Number of Participants

This activity will work with any size of group

Amount of Time

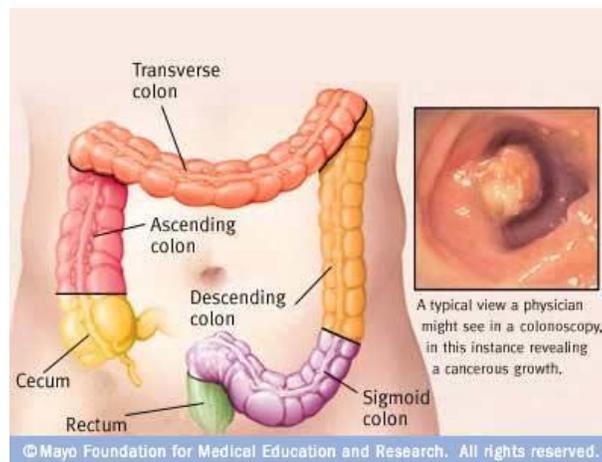
30 minutes. This activity may take longer if you show the colon health movie.

"What I thought was really fun is that we got to take the pipe cleaners and try to make the shape of what the colon is – you were active with your hands and thinking, 'Okay, now what shape is the colon?' And you would think everybody's colon would have the same shape but everyone's was just a little bit different – that was so fun!" ~ participant comment

"I made a pipe cleaner colon in a cancer education workshop and then shared the activity with my community. It was a fun way to learn the parts of the colon. A lot of people opened up and asked a lot of good questions about colon screening. I still have my pipe cleaner creation-it's a great way to start a conversation." ~ participant comment

Each participant chooses five pipe cleaners and receives the colon health booklet.

Write the following sentences on poster paper or on a white board. Ask participants to call out words to fill in the blanks; provide correct answers as needed. The main function of our colon is to absorb _____ [water] and help our bodies get rid of solid waste. Our colons are _____ [five] to _____ [six] feet long. The _____ [rectum] is the last 5-6 inches of the colon where solid waste (poop) is stored until it passes out of the body through the anus.



Participants look at a picture of the colon and create a pipe cleaner colon by joining and bending pipe cleaners together. Pipe cleaner colons will be about 5 feet in length. The first pipe cleaner is the ascending colon. With a twist, join the second pipe cleaner to it and shape the transverse colon. Next join the third pipe cleaner and shape it into the descending colon. Next join the fourth pipe cleaner to make the sigmoid colon (sigmoid means 'S' shaped). Attach the fifth pipe cleaner which is the rectum. The rectum is approximately 5-6 inches long. Bend the end of the rectum into an O shape for the anus which is the butt opening.

Invite each person to reshape their pipe cleaner colon into a wellness reminder. This part of the activity may be done while participants watch the colon health movie, 'What's the Big Deal?'

To extend learning, ask participants to read through the colon health booklet. Invite people to underline the health messages they want to remember, star messages that they really like, and put a "?" in the places where something is confusing or they want to know more about. After participants have an opportunity to look at the booklet ask them to share what they have underlined and starred. As people share their ideas, have everyone look at those pages. Participants can read the words they have starred or underlined while the other participants follow along in their booklet. Then ask people to tell what their questions are and provide the missing information or let people know where to find that information. *If you do not know the answer to a question you can say that you do not know and either look for an answer or have them ask their health care provider.*



Talking Points: The colon preparation is a necessary part of having a colorectal screening exam so the health care provider can see ALL of the colon, which is 5-6 feet long. It is important to have a clean colon, in order for the health care provider to be able to see any abnormal growths called polyps during the colon exam. Some polyps in the colon and/or rectum can turn into cancer. Finding and removing polyps early, helps to prevent colorectal cancer.

To conclude this activity, have a group conversation. Ask participants to share:

- What is something you learned or were reminded of?
- What surprised you?
- What is something you plan to do as a result of this activity?



Pipe cleaner colons are transformed into a flower or other pipe cleaner creations and can be given to someone to encourage them to have recommended colorectal screening exams.

