

2020

NEW YEAR
NEW DECADE
NEW HOME



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And now we come to my second piece of wisdom. Whatever instructions you are given by your healthcare professional about preparing for your colonoscopy, follow them to the letter. Don't cut corners, don't start prepping late – do exactly as you're told. I was heartbroken when the nurse called me back and decided after checking me out that I wasn't "ready." I was sent home to prep for a few more hours, paying a heavy price for my lackadaisical approach to the procedure.

I was lucky that doctor Wanamaker agreed to stay through his lunch and not make me go through the whole ordeal again the next day. Filled with gratitude and creeping hunger pangs, I left with prep in hand and returned home. At mid-day (I refused to think of it as "lunchtime," hungry as I was) I returned to their in-house surgical center for my second chance.

This time, thankfully, I was ready to roll.

My first visitor was the anesthesiologist, who filled in a few more details about what I could expect during the procedure and into the surgical room we went. I was meeting with the rest of the team when suddenly the blistering power chords of '80s hair metal gods Poison heralded the arrival of Dr. Wanamaker.

"How appropriate is this song," he chuckled while Vince Neil shrieked out the double negative refrain, "Don't need nothing but a good time."

There are situations in which it's hard to find humor. Standing amid a group of strangers, wearing a surgical robe with your rear end hanging out is generally one them. Just the same, we all shared a laugh at the doctor's MTV theatrics. I half expected pyrotechnics.

In hindsight Motley Crue may have been a better choice than Poison, since my next appointment was with Dr. Feelgood, a milky substance that the anesthesiologist pumped into my veins. As he smiled and started counting, the world got very fuzzy around the edges for a moment. After the moment passed in what seemed like a blink of an eye, it was all over. The whole team, who had just a second ago been hovering around the surgical table was now scurrying about in preparation for the next patient.

Dr. Wanamaker helped me acclimate to my sudden time jump, told me a few more jokes, and then saw me off as I was wheeled away back to the prep area. Despite what he'd told me, it was still hard to believe I'd basically blinked and missed the whole procedure. I'd spent years dreading it, wasting precious time in fear of something that I couldn't even remember now that it was over.

I'd faced up to my fears, unfounded as they were. And I'm come out the other side a little woozy, but relieved that it was behind me (so to speak) and I'd been given a clean bill of health. Oh, and hungry. Extremely hungry.

Ultimately, my story isn't unique. Some 20 million colonoscopies are performed every year, a vital preventative technique for catching polyps and colorectal cancer before they can become fatal. And they can – quickly. According to cancer.net, its estimated that colorectal cancer will cause 51,020 deaths this year, making it the second leading cause of cancer deaths in the United States.

If you're over 50, it's crucial that you schedule a colonoscopy. It can be scary. It can be uncomfortable. It may require a day spent eating nothing but broth and Jell-O. But it may also save your life, and that seems like a pretty fair trade. If not, throw in a post-op cheeseburger to sweeten the deal. ■

EATING FOR A HEALTHY COLON

Diet dos and don'ts

Diets high in vegetables, fruits and whole grains and low in red and processed meats have been associated with a decreased risk of colon cancer, according to the ACS. To help promote good colon health, follow these five diet recommendations:

1. Limit red meat consumption and steer clear of processed meats.
2. Hold the sugar.
3. Up your fiber intake.
4. Drink your milk.
5. Choose grains wisely.

MAKE SCREENING A PRIORITY

While eating right can help keep your colon happy, the most powerful way to prevent colon cancer is through screening. A colonoscopy is a structural examination of the colon that allows physicians to both screen for and prevent colorectal cancer. Go to savannahgi.com for more info.