

Video transcript: Know your enemy Polyps

Hi, welcome to another Museum of Human Disease “Know Your Enemy” video.

This museum specimen is an intestine. What we see in this are a multitude of growths coming off the intestine wall.

A polyp is an abnormal growth of cells from a mucous membrane, most often the lining of the bowel, but various other locations as well. A polyp forms when one cell reproduces out of control, growing up into the intestine. They stay anchored to the wall.

Polyps are generally benign and will stay in place to not interfere with the work of the gut. The problem is though that these are cells that have already started to reproduce out of control, and this is a step in the development of cancers. So the more polyps and the longer they are present, the more likely one will undergo a few more steps and develop into a full blown cancer. Checking for polyps is checking for pre-cancerous cells.

Polyps develop when genetic cues change the way an intestinal cell grows. These genetic cues can be inherited but can also result from exposure to mutagens, things like cooked red meat, alcohol, tobacco, cooked