

Preparing for Your Colonoscopy: Frequently Asked Questions and Comfort Tips

Comfort Tips:

- While drinking the prep, if you feel sick to your stomach, slow down and drink smaller amounts at a time. Wait 30 minutes in between drinking glasses of prep.
- If you do not like the taste of the prep, try drinking it through a straw. The day prior to your procedure, you may also suck on hard candy or chew gum in between drinks.
- If you get sore from moving your bowels, it is okay to use baby wipes to clean your bottom instead of wiping with toilet paper. You may also use vasoline on your bottom.

What do I need to do to prepare for my colonoscopy?

- You will receive instructions on all the steps you need to follow for your exam. These steps will help to clean out your colon. Your colon needs to be completely cleaned out so the doctor can get the clearest picture of your colon during the procedure. For this reason, it is very important to follow the instructions.

What happens during a colonoscopy?

- During a colonoscopy you should expect the following:
 - The exam usually takes about 45-60 minutes
 - You will lie on your left side or flat on your back
 - The doctor will slide a thin tube, called a colonoscope, through your colon to examine the inside
 - You may feel pressure, bloating or cramping but usually no pain
 - If the doctor cannot see your entire colon with the colonoscope, he or she may ask you to have an x-ray or CT scan after the procedure
 - In most cases, patients are given medication to relax and feel more comfortable during the exam
 - Please plan on being at the hospital for 2-3 hours. This includes waiting, preparation and recovery time

What if my colonoscopy shows something unusual?

- If the doctor finds an area of your colon that looks unusual, he or she may take a biopsy (sample) of that spot to look at it further
- A biopsy can be used to test for many different conditions, not just cancer

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- If the doctor finds bleeding in your colon, he or she may inject medication or use coagulation to control the bleeding (coagulation uses heat to seal off blood vessels that are bleeding)
- If the doctor finds one or more polyps (small clumps of cells on the inside of your colon), he or she will usually remove them during your colonoscopy
- These procedures do not usually cause pain

Do I need to bring anything with me to the test?

- A list of your most current prescription and over-the-counter medications, vitamins and herbal supplements
- A list of your health problems and any surgeries you have had
- Your glasses. You will need them to read and sign some important documents, such as consent forms
- Something to read or listen to, since you may have to wait for a short time

Why should I avoid red and purple liquids?

- We ask you to avoid these liquids because the red and purple coloring can stay in the colon and might look like blood

I feel like vomiting and don't think I can drink the prep anymore. What do I do?

- This happens sometimes, but it's important that you finish drinking the prep. If you feel sick to your stomach or vomit, wait until you feel better and then start drinking again
- Drinking prep slower will also help
- Drinking extra fluids like water and other clear fluids the day before and along with the prep helps with nausea
- You can also try drinking some gingerale or a cup of hot tea (without milk) to settle your stomach

I have finished the prep and have not gone to the bathroom yet. Should I be concerned?

- You do not need to be concerned. Every patient is different
- Most people have a bowel movement one hour after finishing the prep
- Sometimes it may take 3-4 hours for the prep to start working

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I'm having watery bowel movements. Do I still need to finish the prep?

- Yes, you must finish the entire prep
- It is important to completely clean out your whole colon
- If your colon is not cleaned out, you might need to come back for a second test

My bottom is sore. What can I do?

- When you're cleaning this area, do not rub it. Pat it gently
- It may also be more comfortable to use baby wipes to clean the area
- You may use Vaseline on your bottom as well

Can I drink alcohol the day before the test?

- No, alcohol makes you dehydrated (when you lose more fluids than you take in).
- Alcohol can also affect how relaxation medication works
- You should drink a lot of clear liquids the day before your test, but not alcohol

Can I chew gum or suck on candy?

- The day before the test, you can suck on hard candy, like LifeSavers, as long as it is not red or purple
- Do not eat chocolate or any candy that has a soft center
- You can chew gum the day before your procedure. Do not swallow the gum.

Can I have a colonoscopy if I'm having my period?

- Yes, having your period will not affect your test
- If it's more comfortable for you, you can wear a tampon the day of your test
- A tampon can be left in place during the test, but a pad would have to be removed