

Colonoscopy Fact Sheet

What is a colonoscopy?

Colonoscopy (KOH-luh-NOS-koh-pee) is a test that can prevent colon cancer or find it early when it's easier to treat and cure. Colonoscopies are done in an outpatient setting at a clinic or at a hospital. The test is done by a gastroenterologist or a doctor who has specialized training to find and remove polyps from the colon and check for signs of cancer. Polyps are growths in the colon that may turn into cancer.

A colonoscope is used during a colonoscopy. It is a thin, flexible tube that has a light, camera and a tool to remove polyps or to collect cells for testing.

Preparation for the Colonoscopy

Before a colonoscopy, the colon must be thoroughly cleansed. This cleaning out process is called bowel prep. If your colon is not completely clean, your doctor may not be able to clearly see your entire colon. This may lead to missed polyps or cancer. For the bowel prep, you will drink a laxative that causes frequent stools and diarrhea. Consider staying home during this time since you will need to use the bathroom very often.

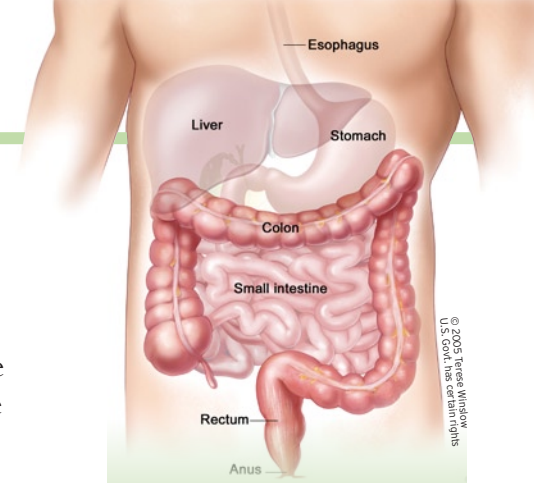
Day of the Colonoscopy

On the day of your colonoscopy, you will be given medicine intravenously that puts you in a light sleep called "conscious sedation." It is likely that you will not feel pain or even remember the procedure. After the colonoscopy, you will wake up in the recovery area and will stay there until you are fully awake. You should plan on being at the doctor's office for about two hours. It is normal to have mild cramps or gas for several hours after the procedure.

After the Colonoscopy

When you get home, plan to take it easy for the rest of the day. Have an adult helper with you to make sure you are well. If you take care of children, it is best to ask someone to watch them. Do not go to work or do heavy activities like house work. The next day you should be able to do your regular activities again.

While problems after colonoscopy are rare, it's important to know early signs of possible problems. Call your doctor if you notice severe stomach pain, fever and chills, or a lot of rectal bleeding. You may have some bleeding for several days after the colonoscopy. Call your doctor's office if you have any questions or concerns.



A colonoscopy is an examination of the inside of the colon, also known as the large intestine.



A health care provider examines your colon for polyps, which are growths that may develop into cancer.



A clean colon (left) helps the health care provider locate any polyps (right), which can be completely removed during the colonoscopy.

More Information

Medline Plus: www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/colonoscopy.html

Cancer Information Service: 1-800-4-cancer (1-800-422-6237)

Washington Colon Cancer STARS: www.colonstars.org

Your Doctor's Office: _____



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Bowel Prep Instructions

Instructions for patients undergoing colonoscopy with GoLytely, NuLytely, TriLyte, HalfLytely or Colyte Preparation.

It is extremely important to follow the preparation below so that the doctor can fully visualize your colon. Your colon must be clear of any stool. If your colon is not clear you may need to re-take the colonoscopy.

One week before your colonoscopy

- Stop using all iron.
- If you are taking blood thinner medications, talk to your doctor.

Three days before your colonoscopy

- Stop eating high fiber foods such as whole grain bread, popcorn, seeds, raw fruits, raw vegetables and nuts. Cooked fruits and vegetables may be eaten.
- If you have diabetes and are taking insulin, consult your diabetes physician for the correct dosage to take on the day of your exam.

The day before your colonoscopy

Morning:

You may eat a light breakfast and lunch such as yogurt, toast, can of soup, half sandwich or eggs.

Afternoon:

After 12 pm (noon), you may only have **clear liquids** (see sidebar).

Mix the laxative preparation as directed on the label and place in the refrigerator for two hours before drinking. Drink the bowel prep with a straw. This may make it easier to drink. You may add the flavor packet provided with the medication. **Do not** add any additional flavoring to the liquid.

Evening:

Around 5:00 pm, start laxative (GoLytely, NuLytely, TriLyte, HalfLytely or Colyte). Drink one 8 oz. glass every fifteen minutes. For afternoon colonoscopies, drink 2 liters the evening before and 2 liters the morning of the colonoscopy. For morning colonoscopies, drink 3 liters the night before and one liter the morning of the exam. Stop drinking the laxative 3 hours before your colonoscopy.

If you should begin to vomit, stop drinking the laxative for 20-30 minutes and then finish the laxative preparation. If you are unable to finish the bowel prep, call your doctor's office.

After completing the bowel prep, you may continue to drink clear liquids until two hours before your appointment. **Do not eat or drink anything until after your test.**

Clear Liquid Diet

(Any liquid that is clear enough to read print through it)

These items are allowed:

- Water
- Clear broth: beef or chicken
- Juices:
 - Apple or cider
 - Prune
 - Grape
- Tang, Kool-Aid (not colored red)
- Lemonade
- Sodas
- Tea
- Coffee (without cream or milk)
- Clear gelatin (without fruit)
- Popsicles (without fruit or cream)
- Italian ice
- You may use salt, pepper and sugar

These items are NOT allowed:

- Milk
- Cream
- Cream soups
- Juices:
 - Tomato juice
 - Orange
 - Grapefruit
- Any soup other than broth
- Oatmeal
- Cream of Wheat
- No red liquids

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