

FAQs – COLONOSCOPY

Can I take other medications before the procedure?

Yes, except the ones you were told to hold/stop by the doctor or nurse. Generally, you should take prescribed medication, as directed, both on the preparation day and on the day of the procedure. However, you must not take anticoagulants (blood thinners) as directed on your instructions prior to the procedure.

What foods can I eat that are low in fiber?

Look for foods such as white bread, white pasta, white rice, potatoes without skin, cooked vegetables, lean meats, fish/seafood, and eggs.

I accidentally took ibuprofen/NSAIDs or aspirin, will my procedure need to be rescheduled?

In general no, but call the doctor's office during business hours to be sure.

Why can't I drink or consume anything red during my clear liquid diet?

When you consume something red such as red Jell-O, it can stain the colon or appear to be blood. To help ensure an accurate exam, these liquids should be avoided.

I already have diarrhea before starting my prep, do I still have to take all of the laxatives?

Yes. You must follow the preparation instructions given to you. Your colon is approximately 6 feet long and must be completely emptied to help ensure an accurate and thorough exam. If the colon prep is not adequate, the doctor can miss polyps or other important things in your colon and may ask that you return for repeat examination sooner than would otherwise be needed.

I seem to be all cleaned out, but I haven't finished my laxatives, do I have to finish them?

Yes. You must follow the preparation instructions given to you. Your colon is approximately 6 feet long and must be completely emptied to help ensure an accurate and thorough exam. If the colon prep is not adequate, the doctor can miss polyps or other important things in your colon and may ask that you return for repeat examination sooner than would otherwise be needed.

I feel nauseous or vomited while drinking the colon prep. What should I do?

You can take a short break from drinking the laxatives. Try drinking ginger ale or another clear liquid or sucking on candy to help settle your stomach. Continue your prep when the feeling has subsided. You can also try lengthening the duration between cups of prep, try drinking every 30 minutes instead of every 15 minutes. It is important to try to completely finish the prep.

I started my laxatives, and I haven't had a bowel movement yet. What should I do?

Some patients have a bowel movement immediately after starting the laxatives and for others it may take 2 hours or longer. Continue drinking clear liquids and following your bowel prep instructions. Patients with a history of chronic constipation may need more prep than usual to clean out the colon. If this does not start the process, you may need to take more laxative.

FAQs – COLONOSCOPY (continued)

How can I tell if I'm cleaned out enough?

You should be passing clear liquid from your bottom, meaning you should be able to see through it. It is frequently a yellow color (normal GI secretions), or it may be the color of your prep drink. There should be no solid stool or food. If you see either of those, take an additional half a bottle of Miralax or try 1-2 bottles of magnesium citrate which can also be purchased over the counter. If you still aren't completely cleaned out after taking additional prep, please call your doctor's office during business hours.

I finished all the prep and have had several bowel movements, but I'm still not cleaned out. What should I do?

Continue drinking lots of clear liquids. If the stools don't turn clear yellow with no solid stool or food, you should take an additional half a bottle of Miralax or try 1-2 bottles of magnesium citrate which can also be purchased over the counter. If you still aren't completely cleaned out after taking additional prep, please call your doctor's office during business hours.

Can I have a colonoscopy if I am having my menstrual period?

Yes.

How long will the colonoscopy take?

The entire procedure usually takes 30 minutes or less. You should plan to be at the facility for approximately 2 - 3 hours. The amount of time may vary from patient to patient, depending on how much sedation is needed and how you feel afterwards.

What is colonoscopy recovery like?

Colonoscopies are common, simple procedures, and you'll be able to go back to your usual routine the next day. After the colonoscopy, you will be taken to an observatory area for 30 to 60 minutes until the side effects of the medication wear off. If your doctor removed a polyp during the colonoscopy, you might need to be on a temporary special diet. If no abnormalities were found, you should be able to eat once you get home. After you get home, you should spend the rest of the day relaxing.

After the procedure, when will I have a normal bowel movement?

Because your intestines were completely cleaned out for your procedure, it may take a couple of days of eating solid foods before you have a bowel movement.

Are there colonoscopy side effects?

The most frequent side effects are slight abdominal pain and cramping caused by the air used to inflate the colon during the procedure. This discomfort usually passes quickly and only lasts a few hours. Immediately following the colonoscopy, you may experience side effects from the medications and sedatives, and those will wear off throughout the day. It's common to feel sleepy, groggy or confused.

Can I drive myself home from my procedure?

No, you cannot drive yourself home. If you require anesthesia or sedation for your procedure, you must have a family member or friend bring you home from the surgery center. Public transportation, including Uber- or Lyft-type service, is NOT acceptable unless you are accompanied by a responsible adult who will be caring for you.