

Preparation Instructions for Your Colonoscopy

While preparation for a colonoscopy may differ depending on the pre-procedure instructions prescribed by your gastroenterologist and procedurist, below are general instructions that can help you prepare for the procedure.

Before Your Procedure

- **Remind your doctor of any and all of your medications at least a week before the exam.** You may need to adjust your dosages or temporarily discontinue taking medications.
- **Remind your doctor of ANY blood thinning medications you are taking, such as Plavix, Effient, Brilinta, Coumadin, Pradaxa, Xarelto or Eliquis.** You may need to adjust your dosages or temporarily discontinue taking medications.
- **Make sure the doctor knows that you have a prosthetic valve.** If you have an artificial heart valve, you may need to talk to your primary care physician or cardiologist about whether the medication you are using needs to be adjusted or temporarily discontinued.
- **Follow a special diet the day before the exam. Typically, you won't be able to eat solid food the day before the exam.** Drinks may be limited to clear liquids—plain water, tea and coffee without milk or cream, broth and carbonated beverages. Avoid red, purple or dark liquids, which can be confused with blood during the colonoscopy. You may not be able to eat or drink anything after midnight the night before your exam.
- **You'll need to completely empty your colon so that there is no chance that residue can obscure the view of your colon and rectum during the exam.** Your doctor will prescribe a laxative or enema kit. You may be instructed to do either the night before your colonoscopy and/or a few hours before the exam.

During Your Procedure

- During the exam, you'll only wear a hospital gown. Sedation is usually given intravenously.
- You'll begin by lying on your side on the exam table with your knees drawn toward your chest.
- The doctor will insert a colonoscope into your rectum that contains a light and a tube to allow the doctor to pump air into your colon. The air inflates the colon, which provides a better view of the lining of the colon. When the scope is moved or air is introduced, it is normal for you to feel some cramping or pressure.
- The colonoscope also contains a tiny video camera at its tip, which sends images to an external monitor so the doctor can study the inside of your colon.
- The doctor can also insert instruments through the channel to take tissue samples or remove polyps or other areas of abnormal tissue.
- The procedure typically takes about 20 minutes to an hour.

After Your Procedure

- After the exam, it takes about an hour to begin to recover from the sedative. You'll need someone to take you home because it can take up to a day for the full effects of the sedative to wear off. Don't drive or go back to work for the rest of the day.
- You may feel bloated or pass gas for a few hours after the exam, as you clear the air from your colon. Walking may help relieve any discomfort.
- It is not uncommon for you to notice a small amount of blood with your first bowel movement after the exam, especially if polyps were removed or biopsies were taken.
- Consult your doctor if you pass a large amount of blood or continue to pass blood, have persistent abdominal pain or a fever of 100° F (37.8° C) or higher.
- Your doctor will contact you with your results and any necessary next steps.