

# COLONOSCOPY INSTRUCTIONS



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## Getting Ready for Your Colonoscopy One and Done Let's do this once and let's do it right!

*This pamphlet will provide:*

- *How to prepare for your colonoscopy*
- *Information about your colonoscopy*
- *Answers to commonly asked questions*

## Colonoscopy

You've been scheduled for a colonoscopy. Colonoscopy can find cancer and save lives. This pamphlet will help you get ready. At Gastroenterology Consultants, we know it can be challenging to get ready for a colonoscopy. We also know that you may have questions about the test. We created this pamphlet to help answer your questions. After you read this booklet, go to the end and complete the checklist as you prepare for your procedure.

This pamphlet was developed by talking to people who had a colonoscopy and asking these people to explain what was confusing or difficult about getting ready for the test. We have found that people who read and follow the instructions in the pamphlet are more likely to have a clean prep compared to those who did not read or follow the instructions in the pamphlet.

## Help Us Help You!

If you follow these instructions, then you'll give your doctor the best chance of doing this right the first time. That way you will not need to repeat the test. Let's make this "One and Done" together.

## About Getting Ready

The **MOST IMPORTANT** thing you can do is to empty out your colon by following the diet described in this booklet and taking the "bowel prep" medicine prescribed by your doctor. We want to help you get ready. If you come in with your colon properly emptied out, then we can make this "One and Done". "One and Done" means just that— let's do this once, let's do it right, and let's be done with it. Then we won't run the risk and inconvenience of asking you to come back and repeat the test.

## About Your Insides

Your digestive system—made up of your mouth, food tube, stomach, bowels, and other organs—helps you break down and absorb food. The last part of your bowels, the large intestine (or the colon), is a hollow tube that helps you absorb water and pass stool and other wastes from your body.

## **About Colon Cancer**

One out of every 16 Americans will get colon cancer. Most people survive colon cancer if it is caught early, and only 5% of people survive colon cancer if it is caught late.

Your colon, like other parts of your body, can get cancer. There is no single cause for colon cancer, but nearly all colon cancers begin as non-cancerous polyps. A polyp is a small growth on the surface of your colon that can turn into cancer. Removing polyps may prevent you from getting colon cancer. If polyps have already become cancerous, catching them early increase your chance of surviving or being cured of colon cancer.

### **You may be at higher risk for colon cancer if:**

- You are older than 45-50
- You have had polyps before
- Someone in your family has had polyps
- You have a family history of colon cancer or polyps

### **You may also be more likely to get colon polyps if you:**

- Eat a lot of fatty foods
- Smoke
- Drink alcohol
- Do not exercise
- Weigh too much

**Please talk to your doctor about how you can reduce your risk for colon cancer.**

## **How Does a Colonoscopy Work?**

The purpose of a colonoscopy is to look inside your colon for polyps, cancers, ulcers, and other conditions. It is important to get a colonoscopy to test for colon cancer once you are 45-50 years of age or older since the disease usually has no symptoms.

Colonoscopy is well-tolerated and pain-free. You will be given a sedative, propofol, by our anesthesia team who will be present to monitor your vital signs during the examination.

You will lie on your side or back during the procedure. The endoscope is a thin flexible tube that has a light and a camera at the tip. Images from the camera go to a TV monitor in the procedure room, allowing the doctor to see the inside of your colon on screen. The doctor will then look for polyps, cancer, or other abnormalities throughout your colon. Your doctor will also remove any polyps that are found.

The doctor will begin the colonoscopy by examining your rectum to make sure you do not have stool left in your bowels. The doctor will then inflate your colon with a soft stream of air. This will help the doctor get a clear look in your colon. The doctor will then advance the endoscope through your colon.

The procedure itself usually lasts approximately 10-30 minutes, although you should plan on one to two hours for preparation and recovery.

In some cases, the colonoscopy may not be completed due to a variation in the person's colon anatomy and concern for a higher risk of a perforation. In this case, we may recommend a CT colonography (virtual colonoscopy) or a barium enema to visualize the portions of the colon which were not visualized during the colonoscopy.

## Why is it Important To Get Cleaned Inside?

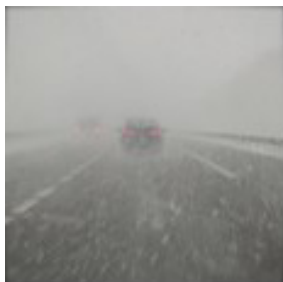
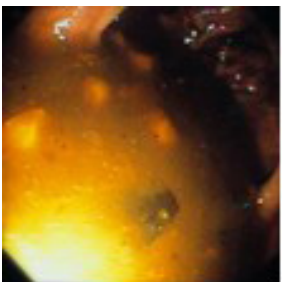
Your doctor must be able to see in order to do the test right. If it is dirty on the inside, your doctor may not be able to see important things, like polyps or cancer, and may even have to do the test again. That would mean you would have to start over, and nobody wants that. So help us, help you, make this “one and done.”

### THINK OF IT THIS WAY:

A clean colon is like driving on a country road on a sunny day.



A dirty colon is like driving in a snowstorm.



**Preparing for your colonoscopy is a process. Here are some things you will need to keep in mind:**

- You will need to restrict your diet and take your bowel prep medicine to clean out your colon.
- You may also need to change your medication routine if you take medicines for diabetes.
- In some circumstances, your doctor may want you to deviate from the recommendations made in this pamphlet. Please always make sure to speak with your doctor to find out if there are any other instructions you may need to follow and always proceed with your doctors instructions, even if they conflict with this pamphlet.

### **Can I take my current medications?**

Most medications can be continued as usual, but some medications can interfere with the preparation or the examination. Inform us about medications you're taking, particularly aspirin products, arthritis medications, anticoagulants (blood thinners), insulin, or iron products.

### **What about Aspirin?**

**Do not stop aspirin.** The latest research and guidelines tell us that it is safe to perform routine colonoscopy and polyp removal while patients continue their aspirin. You may have stopped aspirin before a previous colonoscopy, but the latest data shows us that the risk of bleeding is very low and when compared with the risk of a stroke or other clotting event, bleeding is relatively easy to control. Major clotting events, such as stroke can leave irreversible damage.

### **What about Plavix® (clopidogrel)?**

**Do not stop Plavix® (clopidogrel).** The latest research and guidelines tell us that it is safe to perform routine colonoscopy and polyp removal while patients continue their Plavix® (clopidogrel). You may have stopped Plavix® (clopidogrel) before a previous colonoscopy, but the latest data shows us that the risk of bleeding is very low and when compared with the risk of a stroke or other clotting event, bleeding is relatively easy to control. Major clotting events, such as stroke can leave irreversible damage.

### **What about Coumadin?**

**Do not stop Coumadin.** The latest research and guidelines tell us that it is safe to perform routine colonoscopy and polyp removal while patients continue their Coumadin as long as their INR is in the routine therapeutic range of between 2 and 3. You may have stopped Coumadin before a previous colonoscopy, but the latest data shows us that the risk of bleeding is very low and when compared with the risk of a stroke or other clotting event, bleeding is relatively easy to control. Major clotting events, such as stroke can leave irreversible damage.

## What about Pradaxa® (dabigatran)?

**Please STOP taking Pradaxa® (dabigatran) 36 hours before your test.** Pradaxa® (dabigatran) has an extremely short half-life (active duration in the body), unlike Coumadin, which means the blood thinning effect is gone after 24-36 hours after stopping the medication.

## What about anti-inflammatory medicine like Motrin®, Aleve®, Advil®, Ibuprofen, Naprosyn®, or Naproxen?

Depending on the specifics of your procedure, it may be okay to continue taking these medicines. But check with your doctor for more information.

## What if I use inhalers for Asthma or other breathing problems?

**Please use your inhalers as you would normally use them.** Also, please be sure and bring all of your inhalers to your procedure, as you may be asked to use them just prior to your exam.

## What if I take diabetes medicine?

- If you have diabetes and have an appointment **before noon**, **do not take your diabetes medicine** on the morning of your test.
- If you have diabetes and have an **afternoon appointment**, **take half of your diabetes medicine** on the morning of your test.
- You will **resume these medicines after the test.**
- Please bring your glucose meter with you to your test.
- Continue to measure your blood sugar levels as normal or if needed during the prep process.

## What if I take blood pressure medicine?

If you take blood pressure medicine, be sure to still use the medicine while preparing for the test. **On the day of your test, you should take your blood pressure medicine with a sip of water at least 2 hours before your test.**

## Will I need antibiotics?

**No.** Even if you have a prosthetic heart valve or other prosthesis, the latest recommendations for the Gastrointestinal and Cardiovascular societies do not recommend the use of antibiotics for routine colonoscopy regardless of prosthetic devices.

## ONE DAY Before Your Colonoscopy

### What You Eat:

- Regular diet until 6:00 pm, then nothing but clear liquids.

### What You Drink:

- Please **AVOID DRINKS THAT ARE RED OR PURPLE** as this can look like blood during your test.

## THE DAY of Your Colonoscopy

### What You Eat:

- Clear liquids for breakfast.
- No solid food. You must not eat any solid foods prior to your colonoscopy, even if your colonoscopy is scheduled for the afternoon.
- You can eat a regular diet once you are fully awake and after the test is over..

### What You Drink:

- Please **AVOID DRINKS THAT ARE RED** as this can look like blood during your test.
- Drink 2 tall glasses of clear sports drink with electrolytes (Gatorade® or PowerAde®) before reporting to your colonoscopy. Drink at least 8-10 ounces per glass.
- **Two hours prior** to your appointment time please take **nothing further by mouth**, including clear liquids or prep.

## TAKING YOUR PREP

**The day before your test you should already have your “bowel prep” medicine. If not, call your doctor. The instructions for your prep are located inside the prep box.**

**Large studies have shown that “split prep” has the best results:**

- If you have an appointment **before 12:00 noon**, you will start taking your first part of the prep at **6:00 pm the evening before your test**, and you will take the second part of the prep the morning of your test starting **4 hours before** the scheduled time of your colonoscopy. We know it is hard to get up this early, but it is very important that you take the second part of your prep 4 hours before your colonoscopy in order for the prep to work.
- If you have an appointment **after 12:00 noon**, you will start taking your first part of the prep at **6:00 am the morning of your test**, and you will take the second part of the prep starting **4 hours before** the scheduled time of your colonoscopy.

Follow the directions carefully. How do you know if your prep is working? See the **“IS MY PREP WORKING?”** on page 12 of this pamphlet.

Report for your scheduled colonoscopy as directed by the procedure scheduling staff.

## WHAT IS A “CLEAR LIQUID”?

As you get ready for your colonoscopy, you must only drink clear liquids. A liquid is considered “clear” if you can read something through it. Use this simple test to figure out what you can drink, and what you cannot drink.

### CAN YOU READ THE NEWSPAPER THROUGH IT?

- This is orange juice. Orange juice is not clear because you can't read the newspaper through it. **DON'T DRINK THIS.**



- This is pineapple juice. It's also not clear. **DON'T DRINK THIS.**



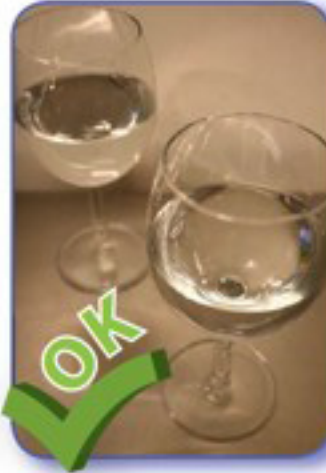
- This is apple juice. Apple juice is clear because you can read newspaper print through it. **YOU CAN DRINK THIS.**



## WHAT DRINKS ARE OK?



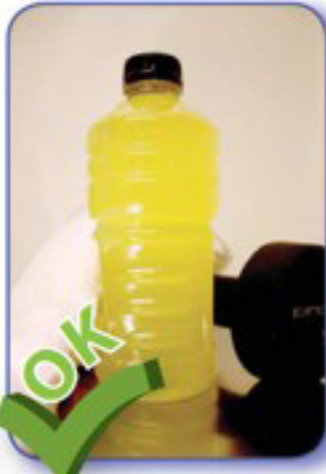
Soda pop, ginger ale,  
and club soda



Water and mineral  
water



BLACK coffee  
(No Cream or Milk)



CLEAR sports drink  
with electrolytes



Apple juice



Tea

## WHAT DRINKS ARE NOT OK?



No Milkshakes



No coffee with cream



No pineapple juice



No orange juice



No milk or dairy drinks

## WHAT ABOUT ALCOHOL?

Although alcohol is a clear liquid, it can make you dehydrated. **You should NOT drink alcohol while preparing for your test.**

## WHAT FOODS ARE OK?



CLEAR broth



Popsicles



Honey

## WHAT FOODS ARE NOT OK?



No breads, grains, rice, or cereals



No soups with chunks of food



No meat



No milk or dairy products



No vegetables



No fruits

## IS MY PREP WORKING?

### How do I know when my bowel prep is complete?

The stool coming out should look like the stuff you are eating and drinking – clear, without many particles. You know you're done when the stool coming out is yellow, light, liquid, and **clear – like urine**. Below is a guide to help.



Dark  
and  
murky.

**NOT OK**



Brown  
and  
murky.

**NOT OK**



Dark  
orange  
and  
semi-clear.

**NOT OK**



Light  
orange  
and  
mostly clear.

**ALMOST  
THERE!**



**Yellow**  
and clear,  
like urine.

**YOU'RE  
READY!**

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### Can I drive myself home after my colonoscopy?

NO. You will receive medicine to make you sleepy during the test. That means you cannot drive home. You must arrange for someone to drive you home after the test. You may also use public transportation (taxi or bus), but only if you have an adult who can escort you home.

### How long will the test take?

The test itself takes about 10-30 minutes. But, expect to spend more time at the doctors' since you'll need to prepare for and recover from your test. Expect to spend about 2-3 hours at Regional Surgi-center, although this may vary.

### What are the side effects of the "bowel prep?"

You will have lots of diarrhea from the bowel prep. This will start anywhere from a few minutes to 3 hours after you start your prep. So plan to be home, and plan to be near a toilet. Most people have bloating and abdominal discomfort. This is normal. Do not be alarmed if you feel these symptoms. Many people have nausea. This is also normal.

### What if I cannot take all of the prep?

- Some people do not like the taste or smell of the medicine. Please do not let this get in the way of taking the medicine as directed.
- Most people have bloating and abdominal discomfort. This is normal. Do not be alarmed if you feel these symptoms.
- Many people have nausea. This is also normal. Please slow down drinking the prep and walk around a bit.
- Rarely, some people throw up while taking the prep. If this happens, please slow down drinking the prep and walk around a bit. Then, try your hardest to take as much prep as possible.
- If 1 hour before your appointment you are having **liquid stool that is still dark, but WITHOUT chunks**, come in for your exam 30 minutes earlier so that our staff can administer an enema.
- If 1 hour before your appointment you are having **solid stool or liquid stool WITH chunks**, please contact us at 309-762-5560 after 8:00 AM on the day of your appointment for assistance in rescheduling your appointment for later that same day if possible or another date.
- A physician is always on call and can assist you with any emergencies, however if you cannot tolerate the prep, the physician can only encourage you to do your best and follow the above instructions.

*Frequently Asked Questions continue...*

**My prep hasn't started working yet. Is that OK?**

People respond differently to the bowel prep — some people start having diarrhea within minutes of taking the prep, while others have no response for an hour or more. If you have waited more than 3 hours without a response, then it may not be working well. Be sure you are drinking enough fluid. If that doesn't work, take the second part of your prep and continue to drink fluids. It should work eventually. Call us at 309-762-5560 after 8:00 AM on the day of your procedure if the medicine is still not working at all despite drinking enough fluid and taking the medicine as prescribed.

**Dizziness and headache could be signs of low blood sugar.**

Drinking a regular carbonated beverage (not diet) or apple juice may alleviate these symptoms.

**What is the best "clear" liquid to take?**

Gatorade, which comes in many flavors, is an excellent choice as it contains electrolytes such as potassium. Avoid RED/BLUE liquids.

**Why avoid red liquids?**

The color can persist in the colon and make an accurate diagnosis more difficult.

**One of the medications I was instructed to take the morning of my procedure is red. Can I take it?**

Medication for blood pressure, heart conditions, and seizure should be taken the morning of your exam regardless of the color.

**Is there any way that I can make this taste better?**

You can try sucking on hard candy. You can rinse your mouth with water or a mouthwash. Do not eat or drink anything other than approved liquids while you are drinking the solution.

**I already have diarrhea before taking the prep, do I still have to take the laxative?**

Yes, you must take the prep as directed by your doctor. Your colon is approximately 6 feet long. The entire colon must be emptied for your physician to see the colon clearly.

**I am taking the prep and already have loose, watery stool; do I still need the rest of the prep?**

Yes, you may have solid stool higher in the colon that needs to be eliminated.

**I see yellow color in the toilet bowl and a few flecks, what do I do?**

If your last bowel movements were clear enough that you were able to see the bottom of the toilet you should be fine. It is ok if you have some flecks of material. The yellow color is a result of the bile that normally colors the feces. This shouldn't interfere with the examination.

*Frequently Asked Questions continue...*

**My bottom is so sore. What can I do?**

To clean the area, avoid rubbing. Gently pat with a wet washcloth. Apply Vaseline, Preparation H, or Desitin liberally.

**Can I drink alcoholic beverages?**

No, since they can cause dehydration and some wines may thin your blood.

**Can I chew gum or suck candy?**

Yes, but nothing with soft centers or red color.

**Can I brush my teeth?**

Yes.

**Can I wear my dentures?**

Yes, you may wear your dentures to the Endoscopy suite. However, you may be asked to remove them prior to the procedure.

**Can I have the colonoscopy done if I am having my menstrual period?**

Yes, the procedure can still be performed. We ask that you use a tampon if possible (not absolutely necessary).

# MY COLONOSCOPY CHECKLIST

## Instructions

Here's a checklist of things to do as you prepare for your colonoscopy. As you do each one, check it off the list by marking an "✓" in each circle. Make sure each circle has been checked prior to coming in for your procedure.

## Before you start

- Read this booklet carefully
- Make sure you have your bowel prep kit. If not, call your doctor
- If needed, talk to your doctor about your medication

## One day before your colonoscopy

- Eat breakfast – regular diet
- Eat lunch – regular diet
- Eat dinner and finish before 6:00 PM – regular diet
- Drink at least 12 tall glasses of clear liquids throughout the day.
- If you have an appointment **before 12:00 noon**, take the first half of bowel prep in the evening as instructed.
- If you have an appointment **after 12:00 noon**, set your alarm for 6:00 am. You will not take any prep this evening.

## Day of your colonoscopy

- If you have an appointment **after 12:00 noon**, you will start taking your first part of the prep at 6:00 am in the morning.
- For all appointment times**, take the second part of bowel prep as instructed, starting 4 hours before your colonoscopy.
- Drink 2 tall glasses of clear sports drink at least two hours prior to your appointment.
- Two hours prior** to your appointment time please take **nothing further by mouth**, including clear liquids or prep.
- If you have asthma or other breathing problems, pack any inhalers you use and bring them to your appointment.
- If you have diabetes, pack your glucose meter and bring it to your appointment.
- Report for your colonoscopy as instructed.