

FAQs(Colonoscopy)

For more information and some patient education videos on colonoscopies, please visit our website at <http://www.oregonclinic.com/colonoscopy-screening> (What to Expect and FAQs).

If anything changes in your **MEDICAL CONDITION** or your **MEDICATIONS**, or you have recently been sick or in the hospital or emergency room, please contact your physician to let him/her know before you come to your procedure.

How long is this procedure going to take?

- Answer:* The total time from arrival to discharge varies. Please allow 1-3 hours.

Can I drive myself home? How about taking a taxi or a bus home? Can I walk home – I only live a few blocks away?

- Answer:* NO!! You will be sedated (made sleepy) for the test and, therefore, SOMEONE MUST DRIVE YOU HOME. You will not be allowed to take a taxi or bus UNLESS ACCOMPANIED BY SOMEONE. NO, you cannot walk home after the procedure. You will be rescheduled if you have no ride or don't have someone to accompany you home.

I have a cold. Can I come in for my procedure?

- Answer:* MAYBE. Please reschedule if you have a fever, a productive cough, difficulty breathing, or if you feel very ill. If you have recovered but still have a lingering cough, it is usually safe to proceed, but you may have a higher risk of complications. It is safest to proceed when your cough has resolved completely.

Accidentally, I forgot I wasn't supposed to eat seeds or I ate one of the things on the list that I wasn't supposed to.

Can I still do my colonoscopy the next day?

- Answer:* YES. Usually one or two dietary indiscretions will not ruin the preparation or the ability of your physician to see what needs to be seen at the time of colonoscopy.

I take a lot of herbal supplements. Can I continue to use those before my procedure?

- Answer:* No, please discontinue any herbal or dietary supplements or medications that you may purchase at the store or receive from an alternative medical provider. They should be stopped 7 days before your procedure. Valerian root, garlic, and ginger are definite no-no supplements. These may affect blood clotting.

Can I take my medications while I am doing my colon preparation?

- Answer:* YES. It is important to continue to take all your regularly scheduled prescribed medications up until 4 hours before your procedure, ESPECIALLY ANTI-SEIZURE, PAIN, and BLOOD PRESSURE or HEART MEDICATIONS, unless your doctor told you otherwise.
- If your medications are due during the time you are supposed to drink the prep, take them an hour before you start drinking it. If they are due during the last 4 hours before your procedure, you may need to take them earlier than scheduled. Check with the person who prescribed them. Also, diabetic patients need to follow specific instructions given to them.

I take antibiotics before my dental procedures because of a heart murmur. Will I need them before the procedure?

- Answer:* It depends on the exact heart problem for which you get antibiotics. For some procedures, particularly a colonoscopy, antibiotics are rarely required. Please make sure you mention this to your physician at the time of the office visit.

I take Xanax/Valium/Ativan for anxiety. Can I take it before I come in for my procedure?

- Answer:* YES. Take your usual dose of the prescribed medication 4 hours or more before your procedure. However, be aware that you will be receiving additional sedation and you need to make sure your physician and the nurse are aware you took the medication.

For Colyte, or other gallon jug preparation, do I have to drink the whole thing?

- Answer:* YES. Despite what your pharmacist tells you, and even if your stool looks free of particulate matter, you must drink the entire preparation. Failure to do so may result in a suboptimal preparation which may make it difficult for the physician to see adequately during your colonoscopy.

What can I do if I don't like the taste of the preparation? Is there anything I can take to make it taste better?

- *Answer:* Yes. (See “**HELPFUL TIPS FOR PREPARING FOR A COLONOSCOPY**” Handout) Add a flavor packet from the pharmacy or a powdered flavoring like Crystal Light (lemon or lime flavors are best). Drink through a straw placed in the back of your mouth so you don't taste it, hold your nose or cover the cup with a lid so you don't smell it, suck on something sweet like hard candies or something sour, such as lemon or lime wedges or sour candies. You can also try menthol cough drops to numb the taste buds.

Should I drink other fluids with my preparation?

- *Answer:* NO. Avoid drinking any other fluids while drinking the prep, because it can dilute the solution. You must drink plenty of fluids before and after drinking your preparation, because laxatives can dehydrate you. Please drink fluids up until four hours before the procedure in order to avoid becoming dehydrated.

I threw up my colon preparation – what should I do? Or what if I get extremely nauseous and start vomiting the preparation?

- *Answer:* (See “**HELPFUL TIPS FOR PREPARING FOR A COLONOSCOPY**” Handout) Some people do get nauseous or may even vomit or throw up the prep solution. If that happens, stop drinking the prep for 1 hour and restart prep at a slower rate, such as one 8-ounce glass every 30 minutes, to complete remaining portion of prep. If you vomit a second time or have persistent nausea despite following the above instructions, call our office. After 5:00pm you will be connected to our on-call provider. YOU MUST DRINK THE ENTIRE PREPARATION in order to be cleaned out for the procedure. Therefore, if you vomit the colonoscopy preparation more than twice, your preparation may be incomplete and may affect the ability to identify polyps during the colonoscopy and may result in the cancellation/rescheduling of your exam.

I am getting hypoglycemic? What should I do?

- *Answer:* You can take sugared products, even if you are diabetic. This includes Popsicles, Jell-O, sugared juices (e.g. apple, white grape), and sugared sodas. These are all fine to drink and are considered CLEAR LIQUIDS.

When will I begin having bowel movements and what should I do if I don't have a bowel movement?

- *Answer:* Everyone is different. You may start having bowel movements before finishing the entire prep or you may not have results until after you have completed the entire prep. It may start suddenly. Once it starts you will have frequent bowel movements and each time it should get clearer until you see only clear-ish, yellow-ish fluid with little or no particulate matter; it should look like urine. Regardless, YOU MUST FINISH THE ENTIRE PREP even if your output is clear. Failure to do so may result in a poor preparation which may make it difficult for the physician to see adequately during your colonoscopy. This may result in the need to cancel your colonoscopy and reschedule the examination for another date.

Can I use an alternative prep for my colonoscopy, such as high colonics?

- *Answer:* No. Alternative methods for preparation, like colonics, have not been shown to provide adequate cleansing of the colon for colonoscopy, which could lead to the need to repeat your colonoscopy using a standard colonoscopy prep and possibly missed polyp or cancer detection.

My hemorrhoids are flaring because of the frequent diarrhea from the laxative preparation. Also, my perianal area is quite raw and chafed. May I use something for this?

- *Answer:* Yes, you may use any traditional over-the-counter hemorrhoidal remedy such as Preparation H, Anusol HC cream/ointment, or Tucks medicated pads. Also, plain Vaseline, Desitin, or generic zinc oxide-containing cream (usually diaper rash creams) can be applied to the perianal skin prior to the start of your frequent bowel movements. This may help prevent the chafing and tender skin that will come from the diarrhea and frequent wiping. You may reapply as you need.

What will I feel like after the procedure?

- *Answer:* You should recover from the sedation very quickly, but you may feel a little unsteady at first. You should not drive, operate machinery, or make any significant decisions until the following day. Air is used to inflate your colon during the exam to make it easier to see between the folds. You may have minor bloating or abdominal discomfort from residual gas after the exam, so you will be encouraged to pass gas while in the recovery area. You may continue to have watery bowel movements for a day or more, and it may several days for you to start having normal bowel movements. You may experience sore throat/jaw discomfort from positioning your head for better breathing during sedation.