

*GI Associates & Endoscopy Center is pleased to recommend this booklet, developed by UCLA Health Systems, to help you achieve an optimal prep for your procedure.*

**UCLA** Health System

## Preparing for Your Colonoscopy



Information, Instructions and  
Answers to Your Questions

## What's Inside This Booklet?

---

About This Booklet .....	1
About Your Insides .....	2
About Colon Cancer .....	3
How Does a Colonoscopy Work? .....	4
Why is it Important to Get Cleaned Inside? .....	6
Preparing for Your Colonoscopy .....	7
FAQs about Your Meds .....	8
<b>ONE DAY before Your Colonoscopy .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>DAY of Your Colonoscopy .....</b>	<b>13</b>
What Is a “Clear Liquid?” .....	14
What Drinks Are OK? .....	15
What Drinks Are NOT OK? .....	16
What Foods Are OK? .....	17
What Foods Are NOT OK? .....	18
Is My Prep Working? .....	19
Frequently Asked Questions .....	20
My Colonoscopy Checklist .....	21

### 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 won't need to repeat the test. Let's make this “one and done” together.

You've been scheduled for a colonoscopy. **Colonoscopy can find cancer and save lives.** This booklet will help you get ready. 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 booklet to help answer your questions. After you read this booklet, go to page 21 and **complete the checklist** as you prepare for your procedure.

This booklet was developed by talking to people who had a colonoscopy. Researchers asked these people to explain what was confusing or difficult about getting ready for the test. The researchers then used this feedback to create this booklet, and tested the booklet in a study to see if it could help people get ready for a colonoscopy. The study found that people who read the booklet were more likely to have a clean prep compared to those who did not get the booklet.

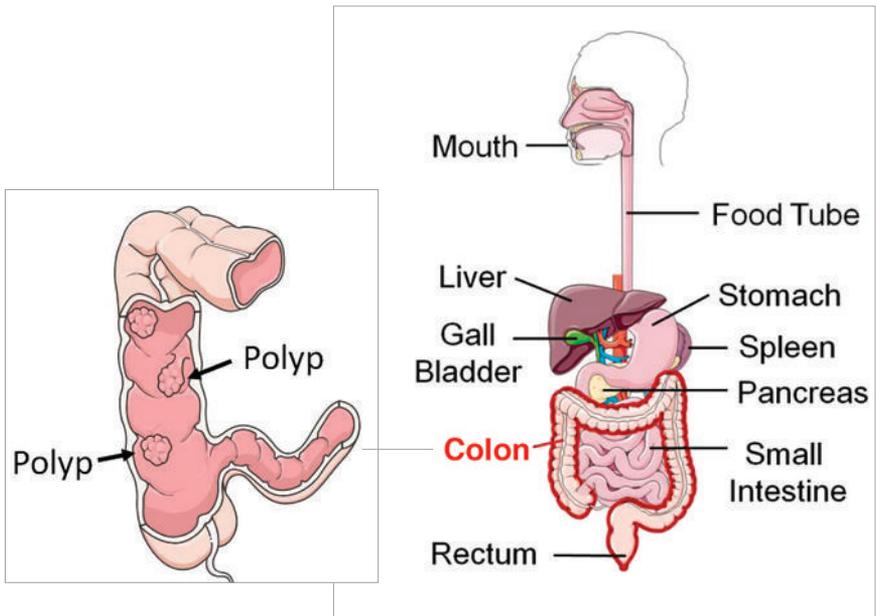
### About Getting Ready

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 having 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.

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 increases your chance of surviving or being cured of 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 percent of people survive colon cancer if it is caught late.

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.

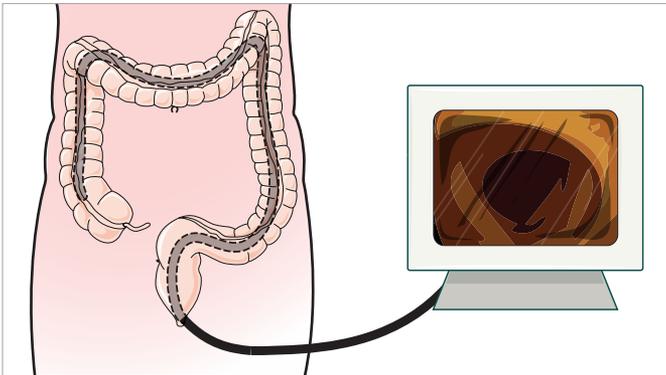
Just before the procedure starts, you will receive some medicine to make you sleepy. This medicine (a sedative) will help you avoid discomfort from the procedure. Most people do not remember having the procedure.

The doctor will begin the colonoscopy with a rectal examination. The doctor will then insert the scope into the anus and as it's advanced, the doctor will inflate the bowel with a stream of air to allow better visualization of the surface.



---

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 look for polyps, cancer, or other abnormalities throughout your colon. Your doctor will also remove any polyps that are found. A colonoscopy usually takes around 20-30 minutes to complete.



Here is a picture of how it works. The doctor will look at your colon on a TV screen. The scope bends as it passes through the colon. The headlight provides light so the doctor can see.

After the procedure, you will need to recover for about 30-60 minutes to let the sedative wear off. You may feel some gas during your recovery caused by the air used to inflate your colon. Most facilities will require someone to help you get home afterwards.

## 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.”

### Imagine This

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.

When your colon is clean, doing the colonoscopy is like driving on a country road on a sunny day. It is easy to see and to drive.



When your colon is dirty, doing the colonoscopy is like driving on a winter road in a snow storm. It is hard to see and hard to drive.



## Preparing for Your Colonoscopy

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 like aspirin, Plavix®, clopidogrel, anti-inflammatory medicines, blood thinners, diabetes medicine, or fish oil.



The guides on pages 10-13 will walk you through the process of preparing for your colonoscopy. At the end of the booklet (page 21) there is a checklist of things you'll need to do.

Make sure to speak with your doctor to find out if there are any other instructions you may need to follow.

## FAQs about Your Meds

---

You may be asked to stop certain medications before your colonoscopy. If you are taking any of the medicines below, please talk to your doctor about how to safely change your medication routine. Make sure to talk to your doctor before stopping or starting any medication.

### **What if I take an anti-inflammatory medicine, like Motrin®, Aleve®, ibuprofen, Naprosyn®, or Naproxen?**

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

### **What if I take aspirin, clopidogrel, or Plavix®?**

Some people need to stay on these medicines even if they are going to have a colonoscopy. Other people should stop taking these medicines before their colonoscopy. Please check with your doctor to find out whether you should, or should not, continue these medicines prior to your colonoscopy. If your doctor says it is okay to stop, then plan to stop taking these medicines one week before your colonoscopy. You will continue these medicines after the test, unless otherwise directed by your doctor.

### **What if I take a blood thinner like Coumadin®, or warfarin?**

You may have already received instructions on how to take Coumadin® or warfarin prior to your colonoscopy. If not, then please check with your doctor as soon as possible to determine how to proceed. You will continue to take your Coumadin® or warfarin after the colonoscopy unless your doctor gives you other instructions.

---

## What if I take fish oil?

STOP taking fish oil two days before your colonoscopy. You can continue taking this after the test, unless otherwise instructed by your doctor. Please check with your primary care physician if you have any further questions or concerns about these instructions regarding fish oil.

## What if I take diabetes medicine?

If you have diabetes, take half of your diabetes medicine while on the clear liquid diet. Then, do not take your diabetes medicine on the morning of the test. You will resume these medicines after the test. Please check with your doctor if you have any questions or concerns about these medicines.



## 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 water at least two hours before your test. Be sure to call your doctor if you have any questions about how best to take your blood-pressure medicines prior to the test.

## ONE DAY before Your Colonoscopy

---

### What You Eat:

You must not eat any solid foods the day before your colonoscopy. You may only eat a clear liquid diet. Go to page 17 for information on things you can eat.

### What You Drink:

You must drink only clear liquids for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Be sure to drink at least 12 tall glasses (about 8-10 ounces each) of clear liquids throughout the day in addition to what you drink with your bowel prep.

### Taking Your Prep:

By 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. **You will start taking your prep at 6:00 p.m. the evening before your test.** Follow the directions carefully. How do you know if your prep is working? Go to page 19 to find out.

Some doctors want you to take the whole prep the night before your test. But many doctors prescribe a “split prep.” A “split prep” means you will take half of the prep the evening before the test, and the other half the day of the test. Check the instructions from your doctor.

If your doctor prescribed a “split prep,” then you will take the **first** part of your prep at 6:00 p.m. the evening before your test, and you will take the **second** part of the prep the morning of your test

## Your Calendar: One Day before Your Colonoscopy

### Time of Day

#### Morning



### What You Eat

Clear liquid diet for breakfast.  
**No** solid food.



### What You Drink

Drink at least **4 tall glasses** of **clear** liquids.



#### Afternoon



Clear liquid diet for lunch.  
**No** solid food.



Drink at least **4 tall glasses** of **clear** liquids.



#### Evening



Clear liquids for dinner. **No** solid food. Take prep.



**Colonoscopy Prep  
Medicine**

Drink at least **4 tall glasses** of **clear** liquid.



## DAY of Your Colonoscopy

---

### **What You Eat:**

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:**

You must drink only clear liquids before your colonoscopy. Be sure to drink at least two tall glasses (at least 8-10 ounces each) of clear sports drink with electrolytes prior to your colonoscopy.

### **Taking Your Prep:**

If your doctor ordered a “split prep,” then you must take the **second part** of your prep the morning of your test.

## Your Calendar: the Day of Your Colonoscopy

Time of Day	What You Eat	What You Drink
<p>Morning</p> 	<p>Clear liquids for breakfast. <b>No</b> solid food.</p> 	<p>Drink two tall glasses of clear sports drink with electrolytes before reporting to your colonoscopy. Drink at least 8-10 ounces per glass</p>  <p><b>Report for your scheduled colonoscopy</b></p>
<p>Afternoon</p> 	<p>Regular meal <b>after</b> test is done.</p> <p><b>EAT.</b></p>	
<p>Evening</p> 	<p>Regular meal after test is done.</p> <p><b>EAT.</b></p>	<p><b>You're done!</b> No more restrictions on what you drink.</p>

## What Is a “Clear Liquid?”

---

As you get ready for your colonoscopy, you must drink only 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.



◀ **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?



 **OK** Soda pop, ginger ale, and club soda



 **OK** Water and mineral water



 **OK** BLACK coffee (no cream or milk)



 **OK** CLEAR sports drink with electrolytes



 **OK** Apple juice



 **OK** Tea

## What Drinks Are **NOT OK**?



 **NOT OK**  
*No milkshakes*



 **NOT OK**  
*No coffee with cream*



 **NOT OK**  
*No pineapple juice*



 **NOT OK**  
*No orange juice*



 **NOT OK**  
*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**?



**OK**  
*Honey*



**OK**  
*Flavored gelatin*



**OK**  
*Clear broth*



**OK**  
*Popsicles*



**OK**  
*Hard candy*

### WHAT ABOUT RED FOOD?

There are no studies showing that red food makes any difference to the success of your procedure. When people follow all the instructions in this booklet, they usually end up with clean preps, even if they eat red foods. But some doctors prefer that their patients avoid red foods; if so, your doctor should let you know about this restriction.

## What Foods Are **NOT OK**?

Page 17 specifies the types of foods you can have. Other than these exceptions, do not have any solid food while on a clear liquid diet.



**NOT OK**

*No breads, grains, rice, or cereals*



**NOT OK**

*No soups with chunks of food*



**NOT OK**

*No meat*



**NOT OK**

*No milk or dairy products*



**NOT OK**

*No vegetables*



**NOT OK**

*No fruits*

## 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.



<i>Dark and murky.</i>	<i>Brown and murky.</i>	<i>Dark orange and semi-clear.</i>	<i>Light orange and mostly clear.</i>	<i>Yellow and clear, like urine.</i>
<b>NOT OK</b>	<b>NOT OK</b>	<b>NOT OK</b>	<b>ALMOST THERE!</b>	<b>YOU'RE READY!</b>

## 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), 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 your facility, 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 three 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. 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. Rarely, some people throw up while taking the prep. If this happens, stop taking the prep and call your doctor.

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

Different 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 three hours without a response, then it may not be working well. Be sure you are drinking enough fluid, as instructed on page 10. If that doesn't work, take the second part of your prep and continue to drink fluids. It should work eventually. Call your doctor if the medicine is still not working at all despite drinking enough fluid and taking the medicine as prescribed.

## 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 "X" in each box. Make sure each box 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 medications

#### One day before your colonoscopy

- Eat breakfast — clear liquids only, no solid food.
- Eat lunch — clear liquids only, no solid food.
- Eat dinner — clear liquids only, no solid food.
- Take your bowel prep in the evening as instructed.
- Drink at least 12 tall glasses of clear liquids throughout the day.

#### Day of your colonoscopy

- If your doctor prescribed a "split prep," take the **second part** of bowel prep as instructed
  
- You are encouraged to continue drinking clear liquids such as Gatorade, until 2 hours prior to checking in.
  
- Report for your colonoscopy as instructed.







---

**Notes:**

Booklet developed by:

Brennan Spiegel, MD, MSHS; Jennifer Talley, MSPH; Kristina Cordasco, MD, MPH; Michael Chan, MD, MPH; Hartley Cohen, MD and Bradley Snyder

This booklet is for information only and you should consult with your physician to discuss treatment options and your specific condition.

---

---

**UCLA** Health System