



A GUIDE TO COLONOSCOPY: GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS, PART 1

Please read these general instructions (Part 1) and the specific prescribed bowel preparation instructions (Part 2) at least a week before your colonoscopy. How well prepared you are for this procedure will determine how well your doctor can see inside your colon so please follow these instructions carefully!

WHAT IS A COLONOSCOPY?

A colonoscopy is a test to look at the lining of your large colon. The purpose of the exam is to check for abnormalities, including growths called “polyps” that can lead to serious disease. While under sedation, a flexible colonoscope is inserted in your rectum and passed up through the colon by the doctor.

HOW DO I GET READY?

ONE WEEK Before the Exam:

- Stop taking **iron** or multivitamins that contain iron.
- If you use **blood thinners**, such as Coumadin (Warfarin) or **anti-platelet drugs** such as Plavix, contact your primary care doctor about stopping it for 5 - 7 days before your exam.
- If you are a **diabetic**, contact your primary care doctor about diet changes required for this exam. If you take medication to control your blood sugar, ask your doctor for instructions about how to take your diabetes medication while on clear liquids for the exam.
- Purchase from a pharmacy the bowel preparation selected by your doctor.
- **Start a low-roughage diet 3 - 7* days prior to your exam:** AVOID vegetables and fruits with skins or seeds, nuts, corn, popcorn, and whole grain cereals and breads. You CAN eat: dairy products, pasta, white bread, eggs, meats, poultry, and fish without skin; applesauce and bananas, potatoes without skins, smooth tomato sauce or juice. *7 days is recommended if you have a tendency for constipation or you normally eat a very high fiber diet.

ONE DAY Before the Exam:

- **Drink only clear liquids for breakfast, lunch and dinner.** Solid foods or milk products are not allowed. Clear liquids include: water, soda, broth, bouillon, coffee, tea, Kool-Aid, clear juices (apple, white grape, etc), Gatorade, Jell-O, and popsicles. Do not drink liquids that are colored red or purple, or have any pulp.
- For patients with a history of severe constipation, check with your physician about drinking clear liquids for 2 days rather than 1 day prior to your colonoscopy and using a laxative ahead of time.
- **Start bowel preparation:** Follow the prep instructions for the prescribed bowel preparation carefully (Part 2). The time(s) and dose of the prep must be followed to be effective. If your stool is not clear watery liquid after completing the preparation, your exam may need to be rescheduled.
- Stay close to a bathroom after starting prep. Soft toilet paper or moist wipes are recommended, as well as applying Vaseline or other ointment to decrease rectal discomfort.

ON THE DAY Of Your Exam:

- If your bowel preparation has a morning dose, take it and the required clear liquids 3 hours before you leave your house for your appointment. It is important to drink lots of fluids up until this time to clean the colon and stay well hydrated. You may continue to take your blood pressure medicine and any heart medications the morning of the exam with a sip of water. Regardless of the preparation type and the time of your procedure, stop all liquids 2 hours before your exam.
- Bring someone with you to drive you home; you will be given sedatives during the exam and will not be allowed to drive the rest of the day. Please limit the number of people you bring with you to 2. You must have a responsible adult with you to take a taxi or JAUNT shuttle home. If you do not have a driver or responsible adult with you, your exam will be rescheduled.
- Bring a list of current medications and medication allergies.
- Please arrive 1 hour before your appointment to allow for parking, registration, and nursing care.

REGISTRATION

- When you arrive for your exam, walk through the main entrance towards the Cafeteria. Continue down the hallway behind the Cafeteria to the Digestive Health Center door. Bring your parking ticket so we can validate it for free parking. If your procedure is being done at the UVA Outpatient Surgery Center, check in at the front desk.
- Please sign in with the receptionist.
- You will be asked to fill out paperwork before your procedure.
- You should plan on spending at least 3-4 hours with us for your exam. Please keep in mind that appointments are approximate times. We will do everything possible to avoid a delay for your exam, but emergencies may interrupt the schedule. If a delay occurs, we will do our best to update you.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN DURING THE EXAM?

- A doctor will explain the exam to you and ask you to sign a consent form giving them permission to do the exam. Ask them any questions you might have.
- Your ride home will be confirmed before the exam. A nurse will place an IV (needle) in your arm to give you necessary medicines and fluid. You will be given sedation through the IV to help you relax.
- Your blood pressure, pulse and oxygen level will be checked throughout the exam.
- During the test, you will lie on your left side. A flexible tube is inserted into your rectum. You may feel some cramping or bloating during the test since your colon will be partially filled with air to help the doctor look at the lining of your colon.
- If the doctor sees anything unusual, a biopsy (small piece of tissue) may be taken for testing. Your doctor may also remove any polyps or growths seen. You will not feel either the biopsy or polyp removal.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN AFTER THE EXAM?

- You will be taken to the Recovery Room to rest and your blood pressure, pulse, and oxygen level will be checked until you are more awake. After you pass some air, your IV will be removed and you will be offered something to drink. Your driver or responsible adult must come into the Recovery area to take you home. Older people may want to ask a family member to stay with them at home until the next day.
- Before you leave, the nurse or doctor will discuss the preliminary results of your exam with you. You will be given discharge instructions which will note if any tissue or a polyp was removed.
- The final results of your exam and any tissue analysis will be sent to the doctor that referred you in 1-2 weeks. **Please contact the physician who referred you for information about your final exam results and further medical recommendations, if any.**

AFTER YOU LEAVE: HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- You may have some abdominal bloating or discomfort after the exam. Moving around will help relieve the gas pressure. You should feel better after passing gas.
- You may resume your regular diet gradually. We recommend liquids and light foods for that day.
- You are not allowed to drive or operate machinery for the rest of the day. Avoid making any important decisions. Plan on resting at home that day. You can return to normal routines the next day.
- **For problems after the exam, call (434) 982-0225 during the day, or after hours call 434-924-0000 and ask for the GI Doctor on call. Examples of problems that you should call us for are: increased or lasting pain, rectal bleeding, shortness of breath, or fever. You may also go to your local emergency room.**

For patients scheduled at UVA Digestive Health Center

If you have any questions about the exam or the preparation, please call the Endoscopy Coordinator, at 434-243-6346. To cancel or reschedule your test, please call 434-924-2959. If you have to change the appointment, please contact us at least a week ahead as a courtesy to other patients and your doctor.

For patients scheduled at UVA Outpatient Surgery Center

If you have any questions about the exam or the preparation, please call 434-982-3107. To cancel or reschedule your test, please call 434-982-3109. If you have to change the appointment, please contact us at least a week ahead as a courtesy to other patients and your doctor.