

Patient Information: Screening-Related Colonoscopy

Before the Colonoscopy

Make sure we know about all the medicine you take as they can affect the preparation (prep) or test.

- Most medicine can be taken up to and on the day of your test. Take your medicine either 2 hours before or 2 hours after drinking the bowel prep solution to make sure they're absorbed.
- **Diabetic pills** and/or **insulin, blood thinners**, and antithrombotics are examples of medicine that may need to **be adjusted or stopped**. Please make sure you talk to the nurse or doctor before your test if you take these medicines as they will tell you if you need to stop or adjust any medicine before your test.
- If you start a new medicine between your pre-colonoscopy visit and date of your colonoscopy, be sure to tell the nurse and/or doctor the name of the medicine when you come for your test or call us before the appointment.
- Tell the doctor and nurse about any drug allergies or health issues you have.

Preparing Your Bowel

The most important thing that you can do to make sure your colonoscopy is a success is to make sure your bowel is prepared properly. The colon must be cleaned out so that the bowel wall and any issues (like polyps or other growths) can be seen. If the bowel isn't cleaned out, there is a chance that a polyp or other abnormality may not be seen and the test will have to be done again.

- The bowel is prepared by drinking a bowel prep solution that's a very strong laxative. Drinking this solution will cause you to have diarrhea.
- Your bowel movements will begin between 1 to 4 hours after drinking the laxative.
- Make sure you drink lots of clear fluids so you don't become dehydrated.
- **Only buy the bowel prep solution you were told to buy. Do not substitute or mix bowel prep solutions with one another.**
- Severe reactions can happen, but this is rare. Call 9-1-1 if you:
 - have very bad pain in your abdomen
 - faint or feel like fainting
 - have vomiting that won't stop
 - have swelling or hives

Please call the site where you're having your test done and let them know.

Tips when Drinking the Bowel Prep Solution

- It helps to use a straw, placed far back in your mouth, to drink the mixture.
- Rinse your mouth with water or mouthwash after drinking the solution, or brush your teeth.
- Sip on liquids with a strong taste, like PowerAde[®]/Gatorade[®] after drinking the solution (**no red drinks, orange is okay**).
- Suck on a hard candy or a sucker during or after you drink the solution.
- If you feel sick to your stomach, drinking ginger ale may help to settle your stomach. Keep drinking the clear fluids, but in smaller amounts and more often so that you don't get dehydrated.

You can also take anti-nausea medicine (like Gravol[®]) if you're feeling sick to your stomach. Take 25 to 50 mg every 4 to 6 hours as needed. You can buy the medicine at a drugstore, but will have to ask the pharmacist for it. It's very important to keep drinking the bowel prep solution even if you're feeling sick to your stomach.

When You Arrive for Your Colonoscopy

- Please be at the reception desk at the time written on the first page of your bowel preparation instructions. Bring your Alberta Healthcare card and picture identification (e.g., driver's license). Leave all valuables at home (e.g., credit cards, money, and jewellery).
- A nurse will take you into another area, where you will change into a patient gown and take off your underwear. The nurse will review the medicine you take, any allergies you have, and check your blood pressure and pulse.
- An intravenous (IV) will be started in a vein in your hand or arm.
- The doctor doing the colonoscopy will meet with you and answer any questions.
- You'll be taken into the procedure room.
- You may be given medicine through the IV that will make you sleepy and lessen any discomfort. Some people fall asleep during the procedure, but are easy to wake up and can follow commands. Many people are awake enough to watch the procedure on the monitor.
- The colonoscopy tube is inserted into your rectum (bum) and passed up into the colon.
- You'll go back to the recovery area after the test is done. You'll be asked to pass as much of the air that was put in your bowel for the colonoscopy as you can.



- Before you leave, the nurse or doctor will go over the results of your colonoscopy and tell you what follow up to have.
- You can go back to work the next day.
- It's not a good idea to plan air travel or long-distance travel within 2 weeks of your colonoscopy. This is because you may not be covered by your travel insurance plan if you had a complication after your colonoscopy and were out of the province or country. Please check with your travel insurance provider.