

# Your five-day guide for your colonoscopy using a four-litre bowel preparation

Patient's name:

Your colonoscopy is on:

*(Day of the week, month, date and year)*

Clinic where you are having your colonoscopy:

Please arrive for your colonoscopy at:

Clinic telephone number:

'Ask a Question' telephone number:

Start to get ready five days before on:

*(Day of the week, month, date and year)*

## Please prepare ahead of time



Getting ready for a colonoscopy takes five days. This handout goes through what you'll need to do each day in your **five-day preparation**. Please read through these instructions before starting to get ready for your test.

You may find it **helpful to watch the video** that goes along with this handout: Visit [myhealth.alberta.ca/colonoscopy](https://myhealth.alberta.ca/colonoscopy) or scan this QR code. If you have any questions about the instructions, please call the 'Ask a Question' telephone number listed above.

## General points about your upcoming colonoscopy

Before your colonoscopy tell the doctor or nurse about any drug allergies or health issues you have. Tell the nurse or doctor if you have any medical devices such as an insulin pump, pacemaker, defibrillator, home oxygen, sleep apnea machine, or hearing aids.

**Write down all of the medicines you take.** Your list should include prescriptions, over the counter medicine, such as Advil™, Aspirin™, iron supplements and herbal supplements. Be sure to include strong painkillers (opioids), tranquilizers such as Valium™ and Xanax™, marijuana or other nonprescription drugs. **Make sure your nurse or doctor sees this list.**

## Medicines



Most medicine can be taken up to and on the day of your test. If you take regular medicine by mouth you may need to adjust the timing. Medicines taken within two hours of drinking the bowel preparation may not be fully absorbed into your body and may not work as well.

Do not take any medicine within the two hours before or after drinking the bowel preparation solution. If you need advice on when to take your medicines, talk to your pharmacist or healthcare provider.

**Diabetic pills and or insulin, blood thinners, and antithrombotics**, such as Coumadin™, Plavix™, Pradaxa™ and Xarelto™, are examples of medicines that **might need to be adjusted or stopped**.

If you take these medicines talk to the nurse or doctor before your test. They will tell you if you need to stop or adjust any medicine before your test.

**If you start taking any new medicine once your test is booked that the clinic doesn't know about, let them know right away.**

Some medicines can make the test unsafe to be done. Call the 'Ask a Question' telephone number listed on the first page before the day of your test to make sure it is OK to take.

## Make plans for getting home after the test



- You may choose whether or not you want to have sedation medicine. Colonoscopies can be comfortable without medicine to help you relax (sedation). Some people can get cramps (pain). Many people do choose to have sedation medicine for the procedure.
- If you have sedation medicine, **you may not drive for at least eight hours** after you were given sedation. Sedation will make you feel sleepy. A responsible adult is required to take you home after the test.
- **Your driver will need to come into the department** where you're having your test done to pick you up. Do not drive, or take a taxi or bus by yourself to get home.
- If you do **not** want sedation medicine, talk to your nurse or doctor on the day of your test. **Make plans to have someone drive you home** after the test, in case you end up asking for sedation so you can be more comfortable.

**It's important for you to let your driver know the following information:**

Your driver will need to be in the clinic \_\_\_\_ hours after the time you were told to arrive.

OR

A staff member from the clinic will call your driver after your test to let them know when you're ready to go home.

- If you don't have plans for someone to go home with you, you can either reschedule your test by calling the 'Ask a Question' telephone number listed on the first page or choose to have the test without sedation.

## Preparing your bowel

To get ready for your colonoscopy, you'll need to clean out your bowel. The bowel is also called the large intestine or colon. The bowel is prepared by drinking a very strong laxative solution to empty and clean out the bowel.

If your bowel isn't completely clean, growths called polyps or other areas of concern might be missed. Your test might need to be cancelled and rebooked for a later time if your bowel is not clean enough. This would mean you would have to do the bowel prep process again.

Drinking the bowel prep laxative will cause you to have a lot of loose and watery stools (diarrhea). **Be sure to drink plenty of clear fluids as well as the bowel prep solution**, so that your body doesn't lose a lot of water and become dehydrated.

If you need to travel more than two hours to get to the clinic ask about having your appointment later in the day.



Only buy the bowel preparation solution you were told to buy. Do **not** substitute or mix different laxatives. Only follow the instructions given to you by the clinic, **not** the manufacturer's instructions.

## No later than five days before your test

### Buy at a pharmacy or drugstore:

- The four-litre bottle of bowel prep your healthcare provider recommended for you. There are different brands of four-litre bowel prep solutions, such as CoLyte™ or PegLyte™. You won't need a prescription, but you'll have to ask the pharmacist for it.
- Clear fluids such as sports drinks or clear soup broth. Do **not** drink anything that is red, purple, or blue. **Do not drink only water.** Read page 6 for a list of what you can drink.
- You may want to get baby wipes and or barrier cream for any soreness you get from repeated trips to the bathroom.

## 5 days before your test

If you take iron tablets or fibre supplements such as Metamucil™ or Benefibre™ **stop** taking them today.

If you need to reschedule your test, please call the 'Ask a Question' telephone number listed on the first page as soon as possible to let them know.



**Day-to-day detailed instructions  
continue on next page**

## 4 days before your test

Please start eating only low-fibre foods and keep eating them until one day before your colonoscopy.

### Low-fibre foods that are OK to eat:

- Chicken, beef, pork, fish, tofu, or smooth nut butters.
- Well-cooked vegetables without seeds, skins, or peels.
- Dairy products like plain yogurt or cheese.
- Canned fruit such as peaches or pears (without seeds, skins, or peels).
- White bread, white pasta, white rice.
- Eggs.



### Do not eat:

- Nuts and seeds.
- Raw or dried fruit.
- Whole wheat or high-fibre bread.
- Corn, popcorn.
- Raw vegetables, including tomatoes.
- Whole wheat or whole grain pasta, cereal, or porridge.
- Oatmeal.
- Beans, lentils, and quinoa.

## 3 days before your test

Keep eating only low-fibre foods. Low-fibre foods are easy to digest and will make the bowel easier to clean out.

## 2 days before your test

Keep eating only low-fibre foods.

# 1 day before your test

## Before 10 am

**Eat a light low-fibre breakfast** such as plain white bread, clear pulp-free juice, tea, or coffee. Do not drink milk or use milk substitutes like a coffee whitener.

## After breakfast

- Do **not** eat any solid food until after your test is done.
- **Drink only clear fluids** up until two hours before you are asked to arrive at the clinic.
- It's important to drink different kinds of clear fluids, not just water. Sports drinks and clear broths will help replace electrolytes when you're not eating. Electrolytes are minerals that your body needs.
- To stay hydrated drink plenty of clear fluids. Dehydration can make you feel weak or dizzy. This could make you faint or fall. If you can, have an adult in your home with you while you are preparing your bowel for the test.

## Please do not drink

- Red, purple, or blue fluids
- Milk products or substitutes such as soy, almond, or goat's milk
- Meal replacements like Boost™ or Ensure™
- Alcohol

## Clear fluids that are OK to drink

Iced tea, tea or coffee without milk or milk substitutes

Clear pulp-free fruit juices like apple, white grape, white cranberry, or lemonade

Clear soda such as ginger ale or lemon-lime soft drinks, water, and coconut water

Sports drinks like Gatorade™ or Powerade™ (yellow, orange, and green colours are OK)

Gelatin desserts like Jell-O™ or juice Popsicles™ (yellow, orange, and green colours are OK)

Clear soup broth or bouillon



**Things to do '1 day before your test' continue on next page**

Continues from previous page: **1 day before your test**

### In the morning

- In the morning mix the four-litre bowel prep solution by adding water to the fill line on the bottle.
- Put the cap on and shake until all the powder has dissolved.
- Do **not** add anything like sugar or flavouring to the solution.
- Put it in the fridge if you wish. Some people find it easier to drink cold.

### Note

**If your test is in the afternoon** you may have a light snack such as a piece of toast or Melba toast **24 hours before** the time you were told to be at the clinic. For example, if you have been told to arrive at 2 p.m. on Thursday you may have a light snack at 2 p.m. on Wednesday (the day before your test). Do **not** eat any solid food between your breakfast and this light snack. After your snack do **not** eat any solid food until your colonoscopy is done.

### Throughout the day

Remember to keep drinking lots of clear fluids throughout the day until bedtime. This will help you avoid becoming dehydrated once the bowel prep solution starts working.

### At 8 pm

- **Drink two litres (half the bottle) of the bowel prep solution within two hours.**
- Drink one glass, about 250 mL (eight ounces), every 15 minutes. Shake the bottle before pouring each glass to make sure it stays well mixed.
- You may find it easier if you drink the glass quickly.
- If you feel chilled after drinking a lot of cold fluid, don't stop. You might want to drink something warm, like tea or broth, after each glass of bowel prep. More tips on how to make the bowel prep easier to drink can be found on page 11.
- Make sure you're near a toilet when you start to drink the bowel prep. Within one to four hours, you can expect to start having a lot of diarrhea or watery stools. You'll get a feeling of urgency and need to use the bathroom many times for several hours.
- You will drink the last two litres tomorrow.



**See next page to keep track of the bowel prep solution you drink**

Continues from previous page: **1 day before your test**

Keep track of the bowel prep solution you drink 1 day before your test by checking off each 250 mL glass after you drink it.



## The day of your test

**Do not eat anything. Do not drink coffee or dark tea.**

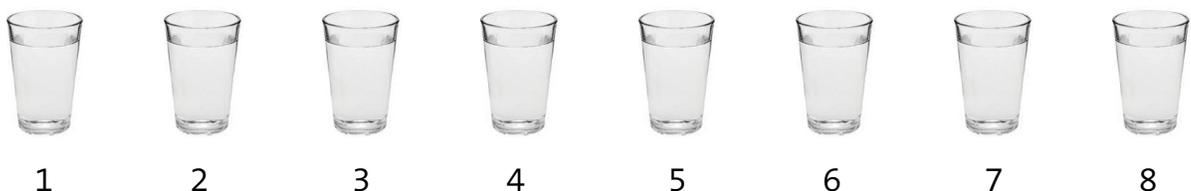
**5 hours before the time you were told to be at the clinic**

- **Drink the last two litres of the bowel prep** within two hours. Just as you did the night before, drink one glass, about 250 mL (eight ounces) every 15 minutes. Depending on the time you need to arrive for your test, you might have to get up very early. For example, if you were told to come at 10 a.m., start drinking the solution at 5 a.m. Some people may find it difficult to wake up early, but it's important to follow the correct timing to make sure your bowel is well cleaned out.
- If you have loose, watery stools after drinking two to three litres, it doesn't mean that you can stop drinking the solution. There could still be solid stool in your large bowel. Make sure you drink all four litres.
- If you have a long way to travel for your appointment, be sure you have enough time to finish your bowel prep.

Write the time you need to **start drinking** the bowel prep solution:

Today at \_\_\_\_\_

Keep track of the bowel prep solution you drink the day of your test by checking off each glass after you drink it.



## Check your stool

By the time you're finished drinking **all four litres** your stool should be liquid. It should be a yellow, clear fluid, like urine. If it does not look like this, call the 'Ask a Question' telephone number listed on the first page as they may give you further instructions.

## 2 hours before the time you were told to be at the clinic

- **Stop drinking** anything two hours before the time you were told to be at the clinic.
- If you have to take any prescription medicine within the two hours before arriving at the clinic, you can take it with a sip of water, unless you have been told something different.

Write the time you need to **stop drinking**:

Today at \_\_\_\_\_

## Before you go to the clinic

- Please bring your Alberta Healthcare Card and picture identification like a driver's license.
- Bring any medicine you were told to bring with you like an inhaler or insulin.
- Leave all valuables at home like credit cards, money, and jewelry.

## When you arrive for your colonoscopy

- Please be at the reception desk at the time written on the first page of these instructions.
- You'll be asked for the name and phone number of the person who'll be taking you home. You'll also be asked about the last time you ate and drank.
- You should plan to be at the clinic for about 1.5 to 3 hours. There are times when tests can be delayed. Your patience is appreciated as sometimes these delays are unexpected.
- A nurse will take you into another area, where you will change into a hospital gown. The nurse will review the medicine you take, any allergies you have, and check your breathing, blood pressure, temperature, and heart rate.
- If you have questions about your colonoscopy, ask the nurse or doctor before your test.

- An intravenous (IV) will be started in a vein in your hand or arm. If you choose to have sedation medicine it will be given through your IV.
- The colonoscopy is done by your doctor and usually takes 20 to 45 minutes.

### After your colonoscopy

- The results of your colonoscopy will be reviewed with you after your test. If no polyps are found you will be told when to have your next screening test.
- If polyps are found it is important that you make an appointment with your family doctor to review the results and find out what follow up is needed.
- You will be given colonoscopy discharge instructions after your test.
- If you had to stop taking any medicine before the test, the doctor or nurse will let you know when you can start taking them again.

### If you were given sedation

Anyone who receives sedation medicine is considered impaired. For this reason, there are several activities you can't do for at least eight hours. Do not drive, drink alcohol, operate heavy machinery or take part in hazardous activities. Don't make any major decisions or sign any legal or financial documents. If you need to care for young children, have another adult stay with you.

### At home

- You can start to eat your normal diet after the colonoscopy.
- Be sure to rest and avoid any hard exercise or heavy lifting.
- You can go back to your usual routine the day after your test.



It is important to note that you may not be covered by your travel insurance if you have a complication (problem) from your colonoscopy and are out of the province or country. If this is a concern, please check with your travel insurance provider or avoid travelling for two weeks after your colonoscopy.

## Notes about drinking your 4-litre bowel prep solution

### Tips to make drinking the solution easier

The bowel prep solution may taste salty or unpleasant. It may help to:

- Drink the solution using a straw placed far back in your mouth.
- Suck on a light-coloured hard candy or sucker, or menthol lozenge just before or just after you drink the solution. Do not suck on anything red, purple, or blue.
- Rinse your mouth with water or mouthwash after drinking the solution or brush your teeth.
- Sip on liquids with a strong taste, like Powerade™ or Gatorade™, after drinking the solution. Do not drink anything red, purple, or blue.

**It is very important to keep drinking the bowel prep solution** even if you feel sick to your stomach. If you feel sick, it may help to:

- Drink the solution slowly.
- Stop drinking the solution for 30 minutes to let the feeling ease and then start drinking again.
- Drink ginger ale.
- Take anti-nausea medicine like Gravol™ or Gaviscon Nausea™ tablets. You can buy it at a pharmacy or drugstore, but you might have to ask the pharmacist for it. Please follow the directions on the box or speak to your pharmacist.

If you try these suggestions and you do not feel any better, call the 'Ask a Question' telephone number listed on the first page.

### Severe reactions can happen, but it is rare

**Call 911** if you:

- Have vomiting that will not stop
- Feel like fainting
- Have swelling or hives (itchy red patches on your skin)
- Have very bad pain in your abdomen

For 24/7 nurse advice or general health information, call **Health Link at 811**.

## Summary

Read all instructions before starting to get ready for the test

	Eating	Drinking	Medicines
<b>5 days before your test</b>	No restrictions	No restrictions	<b>Stop taking iron tablets or fibre supplements</b> like Metamucil™ or Benefibre™
<b>4 days before your test</b>	<p><b>Eat only low-fibre foods:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cooked vegetables (no seeds, skins, or peels)</li> <li>• Canned fruit (without seeds, skins, or peels)</li> <li>• White bread, white pasta, and white rice</li> <li>• Dairy products</li> <li>• Beef, chicken, fish, pork, eggs, tofu, or smooth nut butters</li> </ul> <p><b>Do not eat:</b> Nuts, corn, popcorn, seeds, oats, raw or dried fruit, raw vegetables, including tomatoes, beans, lentils and quinoa, whole wheat or high fibre bread, whole wheat or whole grain pasta, cereal, or porridge.</p>	No restrictions	
<b>3 days before</b>	Same food as day before	No restrictions	
<b>2 days before</b>	Same food as day before	No restrictions	
<b>1 day before your test</b>	<p><b>Before 10 a.m.</b> Eat a light low-fibre breakfast such as plain white bread, clear juice, tea or coffee without milk or substitutes. After breakfast do not eat any solid food until your test is done.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> If your test is in the afternoon see note on page 7.</p>	<p><b>Drink lots of clear fluids</b> (see list on page 6) before and after taking your bowel prep solution.</p> <p>Do not drink red, purple or blue fluids, milk products or substitutes, alcohol, or meal replacements like Boost™ or Ensure™.</p>	<p><b>At 8 p.m.</b> drink the first 2 litres (half the bottle) of the bowel prep solution within 2 hours.</p> <p>Drink 1 glass, about 250 mL every 15 minutes.</p>
<p><b>The day of your test</b></p> <p><b>Make plans to have an adult take you home after the test</b></p>	<b>Do not eat anything</b>	<p>Continue to drink only clear fluids. No coffee or dark tea.</p> <p><b>Stop drinking anything 2 hours before the time you were told to be at the clinic.</b></p> <p>If you have to take any prescription medicine within the 2 hours before arriving at the clinic, you can take it with a sip of water, unless you have been told something different.</p>	<p><b>5 hours before</b> the time you were told to be at the clinic drink the last 2 litres of the bowel prep solution within 2 hours.</p> <p>Drink 1 glass, about 250 mL every 15 minutes, until the bottle is finished.</p>

*Clinics may use this page to attach additional patient information such as maps.*

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