

Colonoscopy Prep Facts

What is a clear liquid diet?

A good rule of thumb is that a liquid is “clear” if you can see through it. Some examples of clear liquids include water, plain broth, Gatorade, and gelatin. Black coffee is also considered a clear liquid, but coffee with cream or milk is not. Liquids such as milk and orange juice are not clear liquids. Additionally, please remember that you should not drink anything red or purple, as this can be confused with blood. Although alcohol is a clear liquid, it can make you dehydrated. You should NOT drink alcohol while preparing for your test.

How can I make the preparation easier to take?

Some people find that it is easier to take the preparation if it is cold. You can place the preparation in the refrigerator or set it on top of ice to cool it. You should not put ice directly into the preparation as it will melt, dilute, and increase the total amount of fluid that you have to drink. It is important that you do not add anything to the preparation that contains sugar, as it will interfere with the proper function of the preparation.

I am nauseated and having difficulty taking the preparation, what should I do?

You should try drinking the preparation more slowly. Slowing down is the most effective way to combat nausea. Second, cooling the preparation will help with nausea. Drinking the preparation through a straw will also decrease the degree to which you taste it and may help reduce nausea. If the nausea still persists, please call our office or exchange.

What should I expect to feel with the bowel preparation?

Lots of diarrhea. Some may also feel abdominal fullness, bloating, nausea, and vomiting. Most people have some or all of these symptoms. This is normal and should go away quickly. Do not be alarmed if you feel these symptoms. Plan to be home and near a bathroom.

Do I need to take all of the preparation?

YES. While some colons will be cleansed before all of the preparation are finished, this is highly variable. The odds of having a clean colon are best if you take all of the preparation. Failure to do so could result in a colon that is not clean enough, which increases the chance that something could be missed. In addition, if the colon is too dirty, you may have to reschedule your colonoscopy and repeat the preparation. Some insurance payers may not be willing to approve a second colonoscopy resulting from poor preparation.

When will I start moving my bowels?

Everyone is different. Some people will start moving their bowels within half an hour of taking the preparation, whereas others may have come close to finishing all of the preparation before their bowels start to move.

I have taken all of the preparation, but I have not started moving my bowels yet, what should I do?

There are a few things you can do to encourage the preparation to start working. The first is to get up and walk around if possible. Being more active stimulates the colon and will aid the preparation. Next is to continue drinking clear liquids as long as you are not vomiting.

I started vomiting after taking the preparation, can I still have my procedure?

Most often YES. If you were able to consume at least 75% of the preparation and you are passing clear liquid bowel movements, then the preparation is likely adequate. If you are passing yellow or brown liquid stool, it still may be OK. If you are passing solid stool or if you were able to drink less than 50-75% of the preparation your procedure will likely need to be rescheduled. Please call our office or exchange to cancel.

Will the preparation irritate my hemorrhoids or skin?

The increase in stools and diarrhea during the prep could irritate your hemorrhoids and the surrounding skin. You can use an over the counter A&D ointment as a skin barrier to lessen some irritation from wiping. Do not wipe, but gently dab the area clean. Rinsing with water instead of wiping may also lessen the irritation.

I ate solid food the day prior to my colonoscopy, can I still have the procedure?

Depends. In most cases, eating solid food the day prior to the exam will result in left over solid material in the colon. However, some individuals may still want to proceed due to scheduling reasons. For those who choose to proceed with the prep, if you are passing clear liquid prior to your procedure, then you will likely be able to have it. Please call our office during normal business hours if you ate the day before your procedure.

Can I still have my procedure if I continue to pass solid stool despite taking all of my preparation?

NO. Solid stool is a sign of insufficient preparation. If you are still passing solid stool up until the time of your procedure, it will likely have to be rescheduled. Please let us know by calling our office or exchange.

I am current having menstrual bleeding, will that be a problem with my preparation for colonoscopy?

NO, it is safe to have a colonoscopy preparation and subsequent colonoscopy while you are having menstrual bleeding. It will not interfere with the exam.

Can I start my prep earlier (or later) than instructed?

NO, the timing of your preparation should be followed meticulously. Altering when you take your prep may have a significant impact on how clean your colon is at the time of your procedure

Is GoLytely, Gavilyte-G, PEG-3350, Nulytely, Colyte, and Trilyte the same?

These are all safe preparations used to clean out the intestines before procedures such as colonoscopy or barium enema. They are all laxatives that work by drawing large amounts of water into the colon. This results in watery bowel movements. Clearing stool from the intestines helps your doctor to better examine the intestines during your procedure.