

Preparing for your Colonoscopy

[Script in English]

Hello, I'm Dr Kakkar with Boston Medical Center's Gastroenterology Department.

Your doctor has recommended that you undergo a colonoscopy. A colonoscopy is a safe, effective, and well-tolerated way to look at the large intestine, or colon. The most common reason to undergo a colonoscopy is to look for polyps- which are small growths in the lining of the colon. Most polyps are benign, but there is a small chance that over several years, they may become cancer. A colonoscopy is the only way to identify and remove those polyps before they can ever become cancer.

In order for your doctor to find polyps during your colonoscopy, it is important to cleanse the bowel so that your doctor can see the entire lining of your colon. This means that you have to follow a strict diet and finish a large amount of liquid laxative before your colonoscopy so that there is no stool or fecal material left in the colon. The picture on the left is an example of a well-cleaned colon while the picture on the right is an example of a poorly cleaned colon. Following instructions about diet and bowel preparation should result in a well cleaned out colon and a quicker, safer, and more effective test. Failure to follow the instructions may lead to cancellation of your procedure, longer procedure time, the need to repeat the procedure, and an inability to detect polyps. This video is meant to explain the steps that you must complete prior to your colonoscopy.

Preparing for your colonoscopy starts 2 days before your actual procedure. Two days before the procedure, you should drink 8 glasses of water throughout the day and stop eating foods with seeds, popcorn, nuts, whole grains, and green vegetables.

One day before your procedure, you must follow a clear liquid diet. That means that you should not eat any solid food the day before your colonoscopy. Breakfast, lunch, dinner and all snacks should only be liquids that you are able to see through. These include apple juice, sodas, Gatorade, Kool-Aid, Jell-o, popsicles, and chicken or beef broth. Tea and coffee without milk or cream is allowed. The laxative will not be as effective if you eat solid food the day before your colonoscopy.

In the late afternoon around 4pm, swallow four bisacodyl tablets and start preparing the laxative solution. Add water and the laxative powder to the plastic container. Shake well until the powder is dissolved and place the solution in the refrigerator to cool.

In the early evening, around 6pm, start drinking the laxative liquid. If your colonoscopy is scheduled for the next morning, then you must complete the entire laxative the night before. You should try to finish the drink in 3-4 hours. If your colonoscopy is scheduled after 12pm, then you should drink 3/4 of the solution the evening before and the remaining 1/4 the morning of your test starting at 6am. Be aware, that your doctor cannot perform the test if you have anything to eat or drink four hours before your colonoscopy.

Remember, a well cleaned out colon will result in a more comfortable, safe, and effective colonoscopy. The best way to achieve a good colon preparation is to follow the instructions exactly. Preparing for you colonoscopy starts with diet modification 2 days before the test. You may only drink clear liquids the day before your colonoscopy and you must complete the laxative as prescribed. Your efforts will help us find more polyps and reduce your risk of colon cancer. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact the Endoscopy Staff at Boston Medical Center at 617-638-6525. We look forward to meeting you.