

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs): Your Colonoscopy and How to Prepare For It

Why can't I eat or drink anything on the day of my colonoscopy? Our first concern is your health and safety. You will be given sedatives to help you relax during your colonoscopy, and these medications affect your body's ability to hold food and liquid in your stomach. If you eat or drink on the day of your colonoscopy, there is a risk that food or liquid will travel up into your esophagus, where you could breathe it into your lungs. This can cause pneumonia and lead to life-threatening complications. **If you eat or drink anything on the day of your colonoscopy, your colonoscopy will be rescheduled.** On the day of your colonoscopy, you should only drink the last few glasses of laxative preparation and a small sip of water with approved medications.

Why can't I drive myself home after my colonoscopy? Why do I need an adult to accompany me if I'm using a bus or taxi service? You may be sleepy, uncomfortable, nauseated, or simply not yourself for several hours after your colonoscopy. In addition, your reflexes will be poor as a result of the sedatives that will be given to you. For this reason, you will not be able to drive (or operate heavy machinery) and you will need someone to accompany you and make sure that you get home safely. **If you do not arrange for transportation to the endoscopy center, your colonoscopy will be rescheduled.**

Why do I have to drink so much liquid laxative? I've heard that there are alternatives, such as pills, that can help me prepare for my colonoscopy instead. Alternative laxative preparations are available. However, they contain sodium phosphate, a chemical that can cause health complications, especially if you are older or have heart or kidney problems. Your gastroenterologist will help you decide which laxative preparations are safest and most effective for you.

What happens if I start drinking the liquid laxative and I become nauseated or start vomiting? Take a thirty minute break, and then try again. Drinking the liquid laxative more slowly may also help. For instance, if you are using NuLytely, GoLytely, Colyte, or Miralax, try drinking four ounces every 15-20 minutes. If you continue to have problems, call the office at (203) 281-4463.

How long does it take the liquid laxative to work? What do I do if nothing happens? The liquid laxative should take effect within three hours. If you don't begin to have frequent and loose bowel movements within that time, a Dulcolax rectal suppository from the drugstore may help. Place one suppository in your rectum; repeat in an hour if needed. If you continue to have problems, call the office at (203) 281-4463.

What happens if I forget to stop taking aspirin, anti-coagulants, or blood thinners?

Stop taking them immediately and call the office at (203) 281-4463. These medications increase your risk of bleeding, which is why we recommend that you stop taking them seven days before your colonoscopy. Our staff will help you determine whether or not your procedure will need to be rescheduled.

How long will my colonoscopy last? Though the procedure itself is only 20 to 30 minutes, you should expect to be at the Endoscopy Center for a total of 90 minutes. A nurse will meet with you for approximately 30 minutes before your colonoscopy. She will review your history, medications, and allergies; start an intravenous (IV) line; and attach special monitoring equipment to your skin. After your colonoscopy, you will rest in the recovery room under observation for another 30 minutes. **If you do not arrive at the endoscopy center on time, your colonoscopy will be rescheduled.**

Will I be able to speak with the doctor after my colonoscopy? The gastroenterologist who performed your colonoscopy will meet with you briefly while you are resting in the recovery room. You may not remember this meeting due to side-effects from the sedatives that will be given to you, so you will be given the option of scheduling a follow up visit at the time of discharge.

When will I receive the results of my colonoscopy? You will be given a hard copy of the preliminary results at the time of discharge. However, it will take about one week to receive the results of any polyp biopsies or removals.