

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS & COMMON ISSUES For Colonoscopy

My bottom is sore.

Use baby wipes and apply petroleum jelly to your bottom as needed.

My bowel movements are not clearing.

The goal of the prep is to develop clear-to-yellow, watery bowel movements before the procedure. For most people, this will occur within several hours of finishing the laxative pills and solution.

If you're not clear in the morning, call Surgical Services at 715-284-3678 and tell them that your bowel movements didn't clear and what time you finished your prep. They will give you advice on whether you're clear enough for the exam or whether further laxative is necessary. We would rather delay your procedure a few hours than have to repeat it due to a poor prep.

I made a mistake with my diet or food instructions.

Our instructions include avoiding high residue foods the day before your prep and having a small, low residue breakfast the morning of your prep day. These instructions are designed to help make it easier for your prep to clean you out. If you make a mistake and eat something restricted or not on the list during this time, don't be concerned. Just continue your prep as instructed. Your prep may have to work a little harder, but it will probably work fine. You do not need to call your doctor to ask if you can still have your exam.

Take in only clear liquids after your low-residue breakfast. Eating solid foods later in the prep day will likely cause a delay or cancellation of your procedure.

I feel nauseated or I vomited some of the prep.

MiraLAX® is tasteless, so your prep solution should taste like the drink it is mixed with. Therefore, "bad taste" should not be a cause of nausea. Some people will feel nauseated because their stomach cannot tolerate the volume of drinking 8 ounces every 20 minutes. If this happens, just take a 30-minute break and start up again at a slower pace (as slow as 8 ounces every 45 minutes) You must do your best to drink the entire 64 ounces and then give it some time to work. The longer it takes to drink the solution, the greater chance you may lose some sleep having to use the bathroom in the middle of the night. If you happen to vomit some of the solution, don't be concerned. Just give yourself a short break and continue drinking the rest of the solution at a rate you can tolerate. You will likely get cleared out just fine.

I just can't finish the prep.

Fortunately, only few people will encounter this problem, since this is a relatively tolerable prep. However, if you run into a "brick wall" with the prep and just can't go on, there's no need to call in the middle of the night unless you have an emergency. Only you can decide whether to stop or continue.

Some patients can still have the procedure after a partial prep. This depends on how far you get with your prep and how well it does in cleaning you out. If your bowel movements are watery, but still predominantly brown, chances are you won't be cleaned out enough to undergo the procedure; however, if your bowel movements are clear or nearly clear, you may still be able to have your procedure.

If you decide to “give up” on the prep in the late evening or overnight, there is no need to call. Simply remain on clear liquids and call Surgical Services at 715-284-3678 in the morning between 7 – 7:30 a.m. You will be advised what to do at that time. Please note: if you take any solid food after “giving up” on the prep, there is NO chance you can have your procedure that day. There is no need to call in the middle of the night unless you are feeling ill or there is an emergency. Only you can decide whether you can continue on with the prep. Simply call Surgical Services at 715-284-3678 and describe your problem, and he/she can help guide you from that point on.

I feel extremely ill or it’s an emergency.

Fortunately, the vast majority of people will have no trouble with the prep. However, any colon prep can make the rare patient feel extremely ill. If you begin feeling light-headed, experience any fainting or near-fainting episodes, or develop chest pain or heart palpitations, you must immediately stop taking the prep and immediately go to the nearest emergency room.

If you have any known chronic illness, such as diabetes, heart, kidney or lung disease, you should be particularly wary and do not delay in getting to an emergency room if feeling extremely ill. All diabetic patients must monitor their blood sugar levels throughout the prep process and especially if feeling light-headed or ill. Immediate treatment for low blood sugar readings is critical.

What if I forgot and took a blood thinner the week before the colonoscopy?

If your doctor gave you permission to stop taking Plavix®- or Coumadin®-type medications, but you make a mistake and take it within a week of your colonoscopy, it is best to give your doctor a call for advice as soon as possible during the day or the next morning.

Last time, they told me I couldn’t take Aspirin or Anti-inflammatory drugs like Motrin® and Aleve®. What changed?

You are now allowed to continue taking aspirin and NSAIDS like Motrin®, Advil®, Naprosyn, and Aleve® during the week of your colonoscopy. This is a change from some instructions given in the past. Studies have shown that these medications are not potent enough to cause problems during colonoscopy.

Are there any other “easier preps”, or colon exams that do not require a prep?

Our prep program is designed to be the easiest and most effective prep regimen available. All preps require drinking at least 64 oz. of fluid, including the so-called “pill prep.” All studies that look at the inside of the whole colon require a cleansing prep. There are studies that do not visualize the entire colon or don’t visualize the colon at all. But these studies are more limited in their sensitivity and usefulness. If you are receiving a colonoscopy for a bowel problem, there is no substitute for a colonoscopy with a prep. If you are being screened for colon cancer, there are some less sensitive screening tests that don’t require a prep, but they are much less sensitive and miss cancers more frequently.

After the procedure, if your abdominal pain is getting worse, you have fever and/or chills, chest pain or shortness of breath seek immediate medical care.