COLONOSCOPY: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Do I need to drink all of the bowel prep solution?
Yes. In order to properly see the lining of the colon, the colon must be completely clean. A colon that is not properly cleaned may make it hard to find colon polyps and colon cancer. This may lead to incomplete exams, missed polyps and a need to repeat the exam at an earlier time.

What are the side effects of the bowel prep?
The bowel prep is meant to cause diarrhea. This will usually start within a few hours after you begin drinking your prep solution. Plan to be home and near a bathroom. Some people have bloating, nausea and abdominal discomfort. This is normal. Do not be alarmed if you have these symptoms.

What if I don’t like the taste and cannot take all of the prep?
If you do not like the taste, try adding a powdered flavoring to the solution like Gatorade, Crystal Light or Lemonade. Avoid red or purple colored flavoring.

If you experience nausea, take a short break from drinking the prep. You may also try drinking something warm such as tea. The warmth can sometimes settle the stomach. As soon as the nausea goes away, continue to drink clear liquids to prevent cramping. Also when you restart the drinking process, try drinking the prep more slowly.

You can also try to drink the prep solution through a straw. Then rinse your mouth out with water right away to limit the unpleasant taste some will have.

If you absolutely cannot complete the solution, please call the Kaiser Advice Nurse (703-359-7878) to cancel the procedure.

If I am already having diarrhea, do I still have to drink all of the prep?
Yes, you must drink ALL of the prep as directed. Your colon is about 5 feet long. The entire colon must be emptied by drinking this prep solution in order for your Gastroenterologist to be able to perform a high quality colonoscopy.

For more information
Visit kp.org/health
• Read about colonoscopy in the health encyclopedia.

Call Kaiser Permanente Medical Advice
• Talk to your medical advice nurse 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by calling (703) 359-7878 or 1-800-777-7904.
TTY: (885) 632-8278.

To cancel your procedure
• Call the Falls Church Endoscopy Cancellation Line at (703) 237-4040 (leave a message)
I see yellow color in the toilet bowl and a few flecks, what do I do?
If your last bowel movements were clear enough that you were able to see the bottom of the toilet you should be fine. You must, however, continue to drink ALL of the prep solution. It is ok if you have some flecks of material. The yellow color is a result of the bile that normally colors the feces. This shouldn’t interfere with the exam.

My prep has not started to work yet. Is that OK?
Everyone has a different response to the bowel prep. Some people start having diarrhea within an hour of drinking the solution. Others have no response for a few hours. Be patient and continue with drinking the prep as instructed.

Which medicines should I stop taking before my procedure?
• Stop taking vitamins, oral iron, and herbal supplements 7 days before your procedure.
• If you are on warfarin (Coumadin), please talk with the Coumadin Clinic for guidance about when to stop this medicine.
• Consult with your doctor about when to stop dabigatran (Pradaxa usually 48 hours), clopidogrel (Plavix usually 5 days).

Which medicines am I allowed to take?
• Tylenol is OK to continue taking.
• You do not need to stop your daily aspirin, as it is safe to perform endoscopic procedures while taking aspirin.
• It is safe to perform endoscopic procedures while using anti-inflammatory medicines. We do recommend you try and limit their use (if possible) of anti-inflammatory medicines such as ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil) and naproxen (Aleve) within 7 days before the procedure.
• Continue to use any inhalers as you would normally use them. Please be sure and bring all of your inhalers to your procedure, as you may be asked to use them just before your exam.

What if I take diabetes medicine?
It is important you check your blood sugar often on the day before and the day of your procedure.
Since you will be on clear liquids, your blood sugar will tend to drop faster than normal. This can be avoided by including some fluids with regular sugar in your diet. If you are feel like you have symptoms, treat with sugar or glucose tablets

Diabetic medicines: On the DAY BEFORE your procedure:
• Take ½ (half) of the usual dose of your diabetes medicines, including both insulin and oral medicines, in the morning before your clear liquids.
• Check your blood sugars often through out the day.

Diabetic medicines: On the DAY OF your procedure
• Do not take ANY oral diabetes medicines, such as glipizide (Glucotrol) or pioglitazone (Actos) or metformin (Glucophage).

What medicines should I take on the day of my colonoscopy?
Continue to take any heart, blood pressure, asthma, anxiety and seizure medicines on the day of your procedure. If you take blood pressure medicine you should take it on the day of your test with a small sip of water at least 3 hours before your test.

What do I need to remember on the morning of my appointment?
• Finish the remainder of the prep solution at least 3 hours before your arrival time.
• Do not eat or drink anything after you complete the last of the prep solution.
• Do not wear any jewelry and do not bring valuables with you.
• Please do not apply any skin lotion to our body.
• Bring a responsible adult to drive you home after the procedure. This person is required to stay in the building during your procedure and may NOT leave and come back at a later time. If you do not have a driver to take you home after the procedure, your appointment will be canceled and rescheduled. You may not walk or take public transportation (taxi, bus, limo) after your procedure.
Why can’t I drive myself home after the procedure?
You will be given medicine that will make you sleepy for your procedure. This medicine impacts your judgment and reflexes. And for medical and legal reasons, you may not drive yourself home after your procedure.

How long will the test take?
The test will take about 30 minutes to complete. However, please plan to spend about 2 hours at the Falls Church Endoscopy Center.

My bottom is sore. What can I do?
To clean the area, avoid rubbing. Gently pat with a wet washcloth. Apply Vaseline, Preparation H, or Desitin as much as you need.

Can I drink alcoholic beverages?
Avoid drinking alcohol for several days prior to your scheduled procedure since alcohol can cause dehydration and some wines may thin your blood.

Can I chew gum or suck candy? Brush my teeth? Wear my dentures?
Yes, you may chew gum but avoid those with soft centers or red color. Yes you may brush your teeth. Yes, you may wear your dentures to the Endoscopy suite. However, you may be asked to remove them before the procedure.

Can I have the colonoscopy done if I am having my menstrual period?
Yes, the procedure can still be performed. We ask that you use a tampon if possible.

Will I need antibiotics?
Only patients on Peritoneal Dialysis should receive antibiotics before a colonoscopy. If you have a prosthetic heart valve or had a previous joint replacement, the latest recommendations from the Gastrointestinal and Cardiovascular societies do not recommend the use of antibiotics for routine colonoscopy regardless of prosthetic devices.

When will I get the results of my colonoscopy?
You will be given verbal and written instructions immediately after your procedure. If biopsies are taken or if polyps are removed, it may take up to two (2) weeks for the pathologist to process and review these specimens. You will then receive your results either by email, letter or by phone. Please do not call or email for results until after 2 weeks has passed.

Can I have my procedure at the Tysons Corner Medical Center?
The Kaiser Permanente Falls Church Medical Center is the only facility where endoscopic procedures can be performed.

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How do I cancel my procedure date?
If you must cancel your procedure, please do so at least 7 days prior to your scheduled appointment date. Please call:

• Falls Church Endoscopy Cancellation Line at (703) 237-4040 (leave a message)

I have more questions, who do I call?

• Falls Church Gastroenterology Office: (703) 237-4442
• Springfield Gastroenterology Office: (703) 922-1313

Questions after Hours?

• Nurse’s Advice Line: (703) 359-7878

The information presented here is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of professional medical care. If you have persistent medical problems, or if you have further questions, please consult your doctor or member of your health care team. Kaiser Permanente does not endorse any brand names. Similar products may be used.