

## Guide to Colon Cancer Screening

By the time symptoms of colon cancer are noticed it's often too late for effective treatment. With the proper screening, pre-cancerous polyps can be detected long before symptoms arise.

If you're older than 50 or have a family history of colon cancer, talk with your doctor about colon cancer screening. While many tests are available to screen for colon cancer, a colonoscopy is often considered the most accurate test and allows the doctor to remove pre-cancerous polyps.

---

*Doctor's name*

---

*Doctor's number*

---

*Date and time of appointment*

---

*Who will drop you off and pick you up?*

---

*Your ride's phone number*

*Follow these steps for a successful colonoscopy:*

- **Relax. It's not really as bad as you think.**
- **Find a ride.** After the procedure you'll still be a little sleepy so you won't be allowed to drive. Well before your test make sure to arrange a ride to and from the hospital or clinic.
- **Give yourself a whole day.** Usually the procedure is scheduled in the morning but although the whole procedure only takes a couple of hours you'll still be a little tired for a few hours afterwards. Don't schedule any important meetings or things to get done that day.
- **Get the prep instructions from your doctor or clinic far in advance.**  
A successful test requires a clean colon. Otherwise polyps can be missed and you could have to repeat the procedure. Be sure to carefully review your test prep instructions and prepare for the test in advance.
- **Stop eating solid foods the day before the test.** It's also a good idea to refrain from heavy meals, especially meat, two days before the test. You may have to refrain from other foods and stop taking medications up to a week before your test. Your doctor may have other instructions regarding what you should and shouldn't do before your test.
- **Begin your prescribed colon prep procedure.** The evening before your test, you'll have to take a prescribed substance and follow the instructions. Stay home and close to a bathroom, as these products are meant to clean out your colon and cause diarrhea.
- **Make the liquid prep easier to swallow.** Some of the prep substances taste bad. To help make it easier to swallow, try adding some Crystal Light or Kool-Aid powder (not red, blue, or purple as these colors can interfere with test results) or add some ginger or lime. Drinking it on ice or through a straw can help. Some people suck on a hard candy or lemon slice after each glass.
- **Drink lots of water and clear liquids.** Drink a lot of water to help flush out your colon and keep you from becoming dehydrated. You can have other clear liquids such as: Jell-O, clear broth, popsicles, coffee or tea (without milk or creamer), soft drinks, Italian ice, or Gatorade but not anything with red, blue, or purple coloring.
- **Make the bathroom home.** Set up the bathroom with books, magazines, a TV or a computer because that's where you'll need to be.
- **The test is the easy part.** The prep is by far the worst part, so when it's time for the actual procedure you can really relax. You'll be given an anesthesia so you shouldn't feel any pain or major discomfort, in fact you'll sleep right through it. The anesthesia is light enough that you'll still be breathing on your own and be able to be awakened easily when the procedure is over.