Preparing for Your Colonoscopy

What is a Colonoscopy?
Colonoscopy is a procedure that allows a colonoscopist to see the inside lining of the rectum and colon using a special instrument called a colonoscope.

A colonoscope is a flexible tube with a miniature camera attached to one end so that the colonoscopist can take pictures of your colon. During a colonoscopy, tissue samples can be collected and unwanted growths can be removed.

Be Prepared
Your colonoscopy may be cancelled or need to be repeated if all the instructions provided to you are not followed.

In particular, the success of the colonoscopy procedure depends on how clean your colon is. There are different types of bowel preparation medications available. Your personal health history will determine the best one for you.

You will not need a prescription for this medication, but it is a good idea to phone and make sure your pharmacy has it in stock at least a week before your procedure.

You will also have to make some changes to your diet starting seven days before your colonoscopy procedure.

Important Notes:
- Drinking only water can cause an issue with the blood salt levels which can lead to heart problems or seizures.
- Please check yourself for possible side effects: nausea, vomiting, abdominal bloating and lightheadedness.
- Get medical attention if you experience ongoing vomiting, severe stomach pain, bloody bowel movements, chest pain and/or fainting.
- Please be prepared! Your colonoscopy may be cancelled or need to be repeated if all the instructions provided to you are not followed.

Contact Us
Colon Screening Program
801–686 West Broadway
Vancouver, BC V5Z1G1

1-877-70-colon (26566)
screening@bccancer.bc.ca

The Colon Screening Program is authorized to collect personal information under the authority of section 26 (c) of BCs Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. The information is used to support patient flow through the screening process, advise patients of results, remind GPs and patients when the patient is due for rescreening or follow-up, quality assurance and performance monitoring of the screening process. Any questions regarding the collection of the information can be directed to the Operations Director, Cancer Screening (Address: 801-686 W. Broadway, Vancouver, BC, V5Z1G1, Phone:1-877-702-6566, Email: screening@bccancer.bc.ca)
Clear Fluid Diet
It is very important that you not only take in a lot of fluids, but a variety of fluids. You need to replace electrolytes that are not found in water. Avoid fluids that contain red or purple food colouring.

Pre-Colonoscopy Checklist

1 DAY BEFORE
☐ Restrict diet to a variety of clear fluids only. Avoid alcohol.
☐ Take your bowel preparation medication.

NOTES: ____________________________________________________________

About Bowel Preparation
Your bowel preparation instructions will be tailored to your needs and timing of your colonoscopy. The bowel preparation medication stops the large bowel from absorbing water. A person can lose three to four litres of fluid a day, so it is very important to drink lots of fluid the day prior to your colonoscopy to stay hydrated. Dehydration is not pleasant and can cause weakness, dizziness, headache and fatigue.

DAY OF PROCEDURE
☐ Arrive on time with BC Care/Services Card and photo identification.
☐ Leave your valuables at home.
☐ Do not wear scented products.
☐ Have an adult who can escort you home from your colonoscopy and stay with you.

NOTES: ____________________________________________________________

7 DAYS BEFORE
☐ Buy bowel preparation medication from your local pharmacy or drug store.
☐ Stop taking iron supplements.

NOTES: ____________________________________________________________

5 DAYS BEFORE
☐ Avoid seeds, nuts, corn, whole grain bread and granola.

NOTES: ____________________________________________________________