

## 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 and video of your colon. During a colonoscopy, tissue samples can be collected and polyps 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. In order to clean your colon, you must take bowel preparation medication. There are different types of bowel preparation medications available. A health care team in your community will take into account your family health history in determining 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 about bowel preparation:

- 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 including 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

BC Cancer Colon Screening  
801-686 West Broadway  
Vancouver, BC V5Z 1G1

Phone: 1-877-702-6566  
Email: [screening@bccancer.bc.ca](mailto:screening@bccancer.bc.ca)  
Web: [www.screeningbc.ca/colon](http://www.screeningbc.ca/colon)

Your personal information is collected and protected from unauthorized use and disclosure, in accordance with the Personal Information Protection Act and, when applicable, the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. This information may be used and disclosed only as provided by those Acts, and will be used for quality assurance management and disclosed to healthcare practitioners involved in providing care or when required by law.

Any questions regarding the collection of the information by BC Cancer can be directed to the Operations Director, Cancer Screening (address: 801 – 686 West Broadway, Vancouver BC V5Z 1G1, web: [www.screeningbc.ca](http://www.screeningbc.ca) or email: [screening@bccancer.bc.ca](mailto:screening@bccancer.bc.ca))

This brochure is also available in other languages including Punjabi and Chinese. Visit [www.screeningbc.ca](http://www.screeningbc.ca) to access translated versions.

Version: September 2020

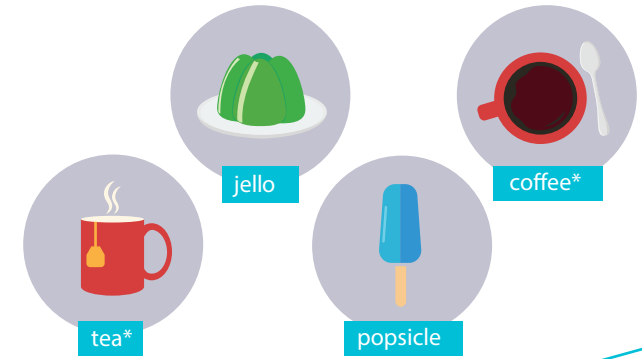
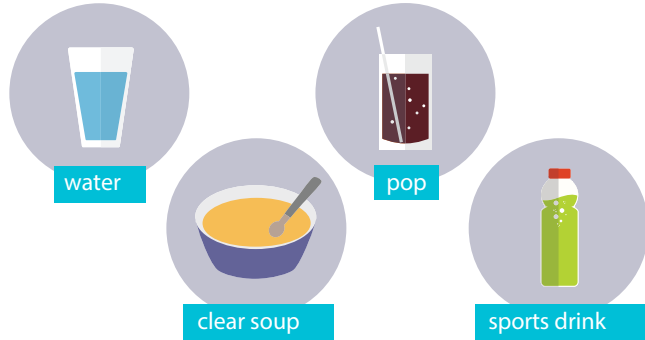


# Preparing for Your Colonoscopy

Answering your questions  
about colonoscopy preparation

## 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.



\* no milk or creamers

## Pre-Colonoscopy Checklist

### 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: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### 1 day before

- Restrict diet to a variety of clear fluids only. Avoid alcohol.
- Take your bowel preparation medication.

NOTES: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### 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 with you who can escort you home from your colonoscopy and stay with you.

NOTES: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## About Bowel Preparation

Bowel preparation medication triggers bowel clearing diarrhea. Instructions will be tailored to your needs and timing of your colonoscopy. The 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.

The medication will start working in one to three hours for most people. If you have a sensitive system it could work much sooner. Make sure you do not leave your home once you have taken the medication! The medication also makes your bowel very active, so your stool will be more acidic. Your bottom may get sore. Consider using baby wipes instead of toilet paper, having a few shallow baths and applying Vaseline or zinc ointment.