

Colonoscopy diet advice and bowel preparation

Overview

A colonoscopy is a test to help find what is causing your bowel symptoms. A specially trained doctor or nurse puts a soft, flexible tube with a camera at the end through your bottom (anus). This tube then passes up inside your bowel.

You can find more information about having a colonoscopy on the NHS website.

This information explains what you need to do in the days before your colonoscopy. Please read the guidance carefully at least 4 days before your appointment. It tells you:

- what you need to eat and drink
- how to take bowel preparation solution
- what medicines you need to stop taking

Your bowel needs to be empty for the colonoscopy. We can then see the lining of the bowel. Diet and a bowel preparation solution help to make sure that your bowel is empty. If you do not follow this guidance, your bowel may not be clear and we may have to repeat your test.

It's particularly important to follow our guidance if you take medicines. You may need to stop some of them up to 4 days before your colonoscopy.

Medicines

Please tell our nurses as soon as possible if you:

- take medicines to thin your blood or prevent it from clotting (anticoagulants or antiplatelets), such as warfarin, rivaroxaban or clopidogrel. This does not apply if you only take aspirin
- have diabetes and are on insulin
- have allergies to any medicines
- are allergic to latex (rubber)

At your pre-assessment appointment, please tell us if you take any regular medicines. This includes:

- anything you buy from a pharmacy or shop
- herbal or homeopathic medicines

Food and drink

You can continue to eat and drink as normal 4 to 3 days before your colonoscopy.

You need to change your diet 2 days before your colonoscopy. Please:

- stop eating foods that contain fibre (this is found in fruit, vegetables, pulses and grains, such as wholemeal bread and cereals)
- eat smaller meals
- drink more fluid

Bowel preparation

You need to take a bowel preparation solution. We give you sachets of strong laxatives. They are used to help you poo and empty your bowel ready for the test.

You need to take the sachets:

- 1 day before your colonoscopy
- on the day of your colonoscopy

Do not follow the instructions on the packet. Instead, please follow the instructions in this information. There is guidance for the specific bowel preparation solution that we have prescribed you.

Bowel preparation solutions

There are different names for bowel preparation solutions and we give them for different reasons. We prescribe you one of these solutions:

- CitraFleet® or Picolax® (sodium picosulphate)
- Klean-Prep®
- Moviprep®

If we are concerned about your kidneys or you have kidney problems, we will prescribe you Klean-Prep or Moviprep. These are less likely to affect how your kidneys work than CitraFleet or Picolax (our standard bowel preparation solution).

You might need to have a blood test before and after the procedure to check how your kidneys are working. Please tell us if:

- you cannot drink a large amount of fluid
- the amount of fluid that you can drink each day is restricted
- a doctor has told you that your kidneys are not working properly

Senna tablets

We might give you senna tablets as well. Senna is a natural laxative, which is used to treat occasional constipation (difficulty pooing).

To use senna tablets safely:

- keep them out of children's reach and sight
- store them in the original container
- check that the foil is not broken before use. If it is, do not take that tablet
- do not take them if you know that you are allergic to any of the ingredients
- do not store them above 25C
- do not freeze them
- do not use them after the expiry date

You may get mild stomach pains for a short time. If the pain becomes bad or you have other symptoms after taking the tablets, tell your doctor or pharmacist.

Talk to a doctor or pharmacist if:

- you have sharp or long-lasting stomach pain
- your tummy (abdomen) hurts when you touch it or move
- you accidentally take too many senna tablets
- your doctor has told you that you have an intolerance to some sugars (find it hard to digest them)

Going to the toilet

You need to stay near a toilet when you start taking the bowel preparation solution.

You can expect to poo frequently and have diarrhoea (watery poo). This starts within 3 hours of taking the first amount (dose) and continues until after your last dose.

We plan when you take the bowel preparation solution carefully. This means that the effects wear off before you are due to travel to the hospital.

Side effects of bowel preparation

It is common to have some bloating (when your tummy feels full and uncomfortable) or stomach cramps.

You can use a barrier cream (a cream to protect the skin from damage or infection), such as zinc and castor oil, on your bottom. This can prevent soreness during your frequent trips to the toilet.

Keep drinking clear fluids to stop yourself from getting dehydrated. As a guide, try to drink about 1 glass every hour. Signs that you are dehydrated include dizziness, headache and confusion.

Please report any allergic reactions, such as a rash, itchiness or redness, to the endoscopy unit or your GP.

Please call the endoscopy unit if:

- you are sick (vomit) at any time after taking the bowel preparation solution
- you have any concerns about the bowel preparation solution

Call 020 7188 3221 (St Thomas' Hospital) or 020 7188 1728 (Guy's Hospital).

Call 999 if:

you have a reaction that causes:

- swelling of the face, lips, tongue or throat

If you take the contraceptive pill

If you take the contraceptive pill, it may not work when you have taken the bowel preparation solution. Use another type of contraception (such as condoms) to avoid getting pregnant. Please speak to your GP, pharmacist or family planning clinic for more advice on contraception.

If your health gets worse

We ask you to complete a health questionnaire. This helps to speed up your appointments and pre-assessment. You can fill in the questionnaire on the day of your appointment.

If your health gets worse since last seeing the doctor or specialist nurse in the clinic, please call the endoscopy nurses for advice on 020 7188 7188. Ask for extension 54059 (St Thomas' Hospital) or extension 53499 (Guy's Hospital).

4 to 3 days before your colonoscopy

4 days before your colonoscopy

Stop taking any medicines that contain iron.

There should be a list of what your medicines contain in the leaflet that comes with them.

If your medicines contain iron, you will see these words in the list:

- Iron
- Ferrous
- Ferric
- Feredetate

If you are not sure whether your medicines contain iron, ask your pharmacist, doctor or nurse. You can also call our pharmacy medicines helpline on 020 7188 8748 (open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm).

Continue to take all other medicines as usual.

Eat and drink as normal.

3 days before your colonoscopy

Stop taking any medicines that contain codeine phosphate (which is used to treat pain, a cough and diarrhoea).

Stop taking any medicines that contain loperamide (which is used to treat diarrhoea).

Avoid medicines that contain iron.

There should be a list of what your medicines contain in the leaflet that comes with them.

If you are not sure whether your medicines contain iron, codeine phosphate or loperamide, please ask your pharmacist, doctor or nurse. You can also call our pharmacy medicines helpline on 020 7188 8748 (open 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday).

Continue to take all other medicines as usual.

Eat and drink as normal.

2 days before your colonoscopy

It is important to drink plenty of fluids. Try to drink 2 litres (about 8 to 10 glasses) in a day.

You need to start having smaller meals. The things that you can eat or drink are listed below. This helps the bowel preparation solution to work properly.

Do not eat foods containing fibre. This is found in fruit, vegetables, pulses and grains, such as wholemeal bread and cereals.

You can eat or drink

- Well cooked, lean (low fat) beef, lamb, ham, veal or pork
- Fish, shellfish or poultry
- White rice, noodles or white pasta
- Cereal including cornflakes and crisped rice cereal, but not bran
- White bread or toast
- Rich tea or other plain biscuits
- Eggs, especially boiled or poached
- Butter, margarine or cheese
- Milk, cream or cottage cheese
- Potatoes without the skins (boiled, creamed, mashed or baked)
- Soya or tofu
- Gravy made from stock cubes (you can use plain flour or cornflour to thicken this)
- Sugar or sweetener
- Clear jelly
- Water, cordial, fizzy drinks, clear strained soup or clear stock

Do not eat or drink

- Fruit, including fresh, dried and canned
- Brown rice or brown pasta
- High-fibre breakfast cereals (including porridge oats)
- Pulses or lentils
- High-fibre, multi-seeded, 50/50 or wholemeal bread
- Vegetables
- Nuts or seeds
- Roasted, deep fried potatoes (including chips)
- Crisps
- Alcohol
- Jam
- Red jelly
- Red cordial or fruit juice

1 day before your colonoscopy

Medicines

Take your regular morning medicines, unless you have been instructed otherwise.

Try to take your usual morning medicines before 10am and your evening medicines after 9pm. Your body may not fully take in medicines between these times. This is because of the bowel preparation solution that you will have.

If you need any advice about when to take your medicines, please contact the pharmacy medicines helpline on 020 7188 8748 (open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm).

Stop taking any bulk-forming laxatives (which create a heavy, more liquid-like poo that is softer and easier to pass). These include:

- isphaghula husk (such as Fybogel®)
- methylcellulose (Celevac®)
- bran
- sterculia (Normacol®)

Food and drink

Have a light breakfast, such as boiled egg on toast (white bread), no later than 9am.

After breakfast, do not eat any solid food until after your test.

Drink clear fluids only today. They may include:

- water
- squash
- fizzy drinks
- clear strained soup
- clear stock

Try to drink 2 litres (about 8 to 10 glasses) in total throughout the day (not including the bowel preparation solution).

You can drink tea or coffee with a small splash of milk. Do not drink alcohol.

Bowel preparation

You need to start taking bowel preparation solution the day before your colonoscopy.

Read more about what to expect from taking bowel preparation solution.

Please follow the instructions and timetable below for the solution that you are taking. Do not follow the instructions on the packet.

The solutions taste better if they are served chilled. You may want to mix the solutions in advance and keep them in the fridge. You need to use them within 24 hours of being prepared.

Sodium picosulphate (Picolax or CitraFleet) sachets and senna tablets

At 4pm

Take 4 senna tablets from the pack with a glass of water.

Read more information about taking senna tablets.

At 5pm

Mix 1 sachet of sodium picosulphate with 150ml of water. Do this in a large glass or jug, as the mixture may fizz over.

Stir the solution for 2 to 3 minutes. If the solution gets warm, allow it to cool before you drink it. You can add more water if you want to dilute the solution (make it weaker).

Please drink the preparation at once or, if you are drinking slowly, finish it within an hour.

Klean-Prep

At 2pm

Empty the contents of 1 sachet of Klean-Prep into 1 litre of water and stir until it is dissolved. Drink this over 1 hour to 1 hour 30 minutes.

At 4pm

Dissolve the second sachet of Klean-Prep and drink as above.

At 6pm

Dissolve the third sachet of Klean-Prep and drink as above.

Moviprep instructions**At 4pm**

Empty:

- 1 sachet A and
- 1 sachet B

of Moviprep into 1 litre of water and stir until it is dissolved.

Drink this over 1 hour to 1 hour 30 minutes.

The day of your colonoscopy

Medicines

Do not take:

- laxatives (medicines used to help you poo)
- medicines containing iron, loperamide (used to treat diarrhoea) or codeine (used to treat pain, a cough or diarrhoea)

You should continue to take all of your other medicines as normal, unless the doctor or endoscopy nurse have told you otherwise.

Food and drink

Drink plenty of clear fluid. You can drink up to 3 hours before your colonoscopy.

Do not eat anything.

Bowel preparation

It's important to take your bowel preparation solution at the right time. This depends on if you have your colonoscopy in the morning or the afternoon.

- If your colonoscopy is in the morning, take your bowel preparation solution at 6am.
- If your colonoscopy is in the afternoon, take your bowel preparation solution at 10am.

Instructions if you have a morning appointment**Sodium picosulphate (Picolax or CitraFleet) sachets**

At 6am, take the second sachet of sodium picosulphate. Prepare it in the same way as before.

Klean-Prep

At 6am, dissolve the fourth sachet of Klean-Prep and drink it as before.

Moviprep

At 6am, dissolve the second sachets of A and B Moviprep and drink them over 1 hour to 1 hour 30 minutes.

Sodium picosulphate (Picolax or CitraFleet) sachets

Klean-Prep

Moviprep

Going to hospital

You may want to bring a dressing gown, slippers and something to read.

Contact us

Call reception desk: 020 7188 7188 and ask for extension 54046

The nurse in charge: 020 7188 7188 and ask for extension 54059

A list of sources is available on request