

Preparation for Colorectal Cancer Screening Tests

Colorectal cancer screening tests such as flexible sigmoidoscopy, double contrast barium enema, CT colonography, and colonoscopy allow your healthcare provider to look for polyps or cancer by examining the actual lining of your colon and rectum.

Properly preparing for these procedures is very important. In order to see the lining of the colon clearly, and to avoid complications, your bowel must be completely empty.

There may be several preparation methods that are effective for your screening test. Your doctor will decide what method is best for you and will give you specific instructions. Ask them any questions you may have and follow the instructions completely.

Several days before your procedure you may be asked to start drinking more liquids in order to prevent dehydration.

In almost all cases you will not be able to eat solid food for several hours before your exam.

Before your procedure you may be asked to eat and drink only clear liquids. This means you can eat things like strained soup or bouillon, but must avoid solid foods.

Avoid clear foods that have red food coloring in them, like red jello, sports drinks, and popsicles.

You may be asked to take a laxative, pills, or cleansing solution before the exam to completely cleanse your bowels. Laxatives and solutions may have to be repeated until there is nothing solid in your system.

Talk to your doctor about what type of prep medication is right for you.

Tell your doctor what prescription medications you are taking. He may ask you to stop taking them or change them a few days before your screening test.

No matter what screening test you have, make sure to follow your preparation procedures for it correctly.

While it may not be enjoyable, properly following your preparation procedures will allow your doctor to get the best image possible.