

Preparation for Colorectal Cancer Screening Procedures

If your provider recommends a colorectal screening procedure to look directly at the lining of your colon and rectum for polyps or cancer, properly preparing for it is very important. These include screening tests such as Colonoscopy, Flexible Sigmoidoscopy, and CT Colonography.

In order to see the lining of the colon clearly, and to prevent complications, your bowel must be completely empty.

There may be several preparation methods that are effective for your screening test.

Your healthcare provider 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.

Before your procedure, you may be asked to eat and drink only clear liquids. This means you can eat things like fully strained soup or bouillon, but don't eat solid foods.

Also stay away from clear foods that have red food coloring in them, like red jello, sports drinks, and popsicles.

In almost all cases, you will need to have an empty stomach before your procedure.

Your healthcare provider will let you know when you should stop eating.

You may be asked to take a laxative, pills, or cleansing solution before the exam to completely cleanse your bowels. It is extremely important to follow all the prep instructions.

Laxatives and solutions may have to be repeated until there is nothing solid in your system. Follow all the instructions, including when to take them, for best results.

Talk to your healthcare provider about what type of prep medicine is right for you. Ask them any questions you may have ahead of time so you know what to do to help your healthcare provider find and treat any problems that may exist.

If you are scheduled for a flexible sigmoidoscopy, you may be asked to take a couple enemas before the test. This is a liquid medicine given into the rectum.

Tell your healthcare provider what prescription medicines you are taking. They may ask you to stop taking them or change them a few days before your screening test.

In particular, discuss aspirin or blood thinners with your provider so you know the correct instructions for taking or changing these medicines.

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

And ask a family member or friend to give you a ride home. Without a ride home, you may not be able to have the test.

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