

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Q: Why should I avoid red, orange, and purple liquids?

A: These colors can stay in the colon and might look like blood.

Q: Is it OK to drink alcoholic beverages?

A: We strongly suggest you do not drink any alcoholic beverages before your procedure since they can cause dehydration, and some wines may thin your blood.

Q: I already have diarrhea before drinking the prep mixture, do I still have to drink all the prep mixture?

A: Yes, you must drink the prep as directed by your doctor. While you may be going to the bathroom a lot, it is important that what you see in the toilet is clear. If the colon is not completely cleaned, the procedure may be cancelled and rescheduled, so it is important to drink the entire prep as directed.

Q: I am drinking the prep mixture and now have loose, watery poop. Do I really have to drink all the prep mixture?

A: Yes, you want your colon to be as clean as possible so that your doctor may fully see your colon and it makes a big difference in the quality and accuracy of your colonoscopy.

Q: I'm having my menstrual period. Should I reschedule my colonoscopy appointment?

A: No. Your menstrual period will not interfere with your physician's ability to complete your procedure.

Q: My procedure is in the afternoon. Can I eat in the morning?

A: To ensure your safety during the procedure, it is important that the stomach is empty. Any food or liquid in the stomach at the time of the procedure places you at risk of aspirating these contents into the lung leading to a serious complication called aspiration pneumonia. You can drink water until 5 hours before your procedure time.

Q: I don't have a ride. Is that okay?

A: No. If you do not have a responsible adult to accompany you home, YOUR PROCEDURE WILL BE CANCELLED.

Q: I ate breakfast (or lunch or dinner) the day before my colonoscopy. Is that okay?

A: If the preparation instructions were not followed properly, residual stool may remain in the colon and hide important findings from the examining physician. In some cases if the colon preparation is not good, you may have to repeat the preparation and the exam. If you accidentally eat any solid food the day before your exam, please call and ask to speak with a member of the nursing staff. You may be asked to reschedule your procedure.

Q: How many days prior to the procedure should I discontinue my Coumadin, Plavix or other blood thinning medications?

A: If you are taking any blood thinning medications please let your endoscopist know. Generally speaking, you should quit taking your blood thinning medication 5-7 days prior to Inova Gastroenterology some procedures; however, you must check with your endoscopist and your prescribing physician to ensure that it is needed and safe for you to do so.

Q: What medications can I take the day before and the day of my procedure?

A: The day prior to your procedure take your medications the way you normally would. However, for those patients taking any type of bowel cleansing preparation, be advised that you may undergo a prolonged period of diarrhea that may flush oral medications out of your system before they have time to take effect. The morning before your procedure you should take any blood pressure or heart medications you may be on with a small sip of water. You can hold most other medications and take them once your procedure has been completed. If you have questions about specific medication(s), please call your doctor.

Q: I am diabetic. Do I take my insulin?

A: You must direct the question to the physician who placed you on this medication. Please check your blood sugar the morning of your procedure as you normally would. If you have any questions about your diabetes management in conjunction with your fast for your endoscopic procedure, please consult your primary physician.

Q: I am on pain medication? Can I take it prior to my procedure?

A: Many prescription pain medications can adversely affect the medications we use for sedation and for that reason we recommend that the day of your procedure you delay taking your pain medication until after your procedure has been completed. If you have any questions, please call your doctor.

Q: May I continue taking my iron tablets?

A: No. Iron may cause the formation of dark color stools which can make it difficult for the physician to complete your colonoscopy if your preparation is less than optimal. We recommend you stop taking your oral iron supplements at least one week prior to your procedure.

Q: I have been on Aspirin therapy for my heart. Should I continue to take it?

A: Aspirin may affect blood coagulation. Please check with your endoscopist and prescribing physician.

Q: I am having a colonoscopy tomorrow. I started my colon preparation on time but now I am experiencing diarrhea and/or a bloating feeling. What should I do?

A: Nausea, vomiting and a sense of fullness or bloating can occur any time after beginning your colon preparation. However, it is important that you drink all the preparation. For most people, taking an hour break from the preparation will usually help. Then continue taking the preparation as ordered. If the vomiting returns or symptoms get worse, please call your physician