



COLONOSCOPY BOWEL PREP

BOWEL PREP FOR COLONOSCOPY

Understanding Bowel Preparation for a Colonoscopy

Bowel preparation before a colonoscopy is extremely important because it allows a physician to thoroughly examine a colon. The bowels need to be completely and carefully cleaned so that the doctor can easily discover any potential problems. Polyps or other abnormalities may be harder to notice if the bowels aren't prepped and emptied properly prior to the procedure.

What Steps are Involved in Bowel Preparation?

The steps a doctor prescribes for bowel preparation can vary from person to person. Your physician will instruct you based on your personal needs as well as your health history. You can expect to make changes to your dietary routine a day or two before the procedure. You'll need to stick with clear, light liquids such as plain gelatin, broth or water. You may also be able to consume sherbet and drink tea, ginger ale or pulp-free juices.

The key is to stay hydrated during the days of bowel prep. Make a point to drink more liquids than normal until your doctor advises you to stop drinking and eating altogether. You may be able to continue taking certain medications, but some products can adversely affect a colonoscopy or the bowel prep. Let your physician know which products you are currently taking, specifically any aspirins, iron-based products, insulin, blood thinners or arthritis meds.

Which Medications are Used for Bowel Prep?

There is a variety of medications used in bowel preparation for a colonoscopy. Many doctors suggest using laxatives or medicated drinks that stimulate the digestive tract and cause diarrhea. Some patients may be required to have an enema to empty the bowels. Sodium phosphate is a commonly prescribed bowel prep medication, but it can cause the kidneys to fail. Those with pre-existing kidney conditions may need to avoid this option.

Patients with kidney conditions can take a polyethylene glycol electrolytes solution for cleansing the bowels. This is also a safer option for those with heart or liver disorders. PEG products often come in powder form, so they can be mixed into a clear liquid. Your doctor may need to write a prescription for your bowel prep medication, so check with your health insurance provider to determine what options are covered.

What Factors Determine Which Bowel Prep Method is Necessary?

Your physical health and medical history are each significant influences that will define the type of bowel prep you need to follow. You will need to discuss any health issues you have with your doctor. If you have high blood pressure or you are pregnant or breast-feeding, let your doctor know. You should also discuss any problems you may have had with bowel movements or obstructions.

Your physician will also need to know if you have had any issues with your heart, liver or kidney. Tell him or her about any allergies to medications you may have as well. If you have struggled with bowel preparations in the past, disclose this upfront. These details are all factors that will determine which medication you're prescribed as well as the steps your doctor will instruct you to take prior to your procedure.

What are the Most Common Side Effects?

The side effects associated with bowel prep depend on the actual techniques and medications used to clean the bowels. Your physician can fully explain which side effects to expect. The most common issues include bloating, abdominal discomfort or pain, vomiting and nausea. More severe complications such as heart failure, seizures or kidney failure can occur, but they are rare.

It's essential to follow your doctor's advice and suggestions when it comes to medication dosages and the preparation process. Doing so can lower your chances of experiencing severe side effects. If you forget to take any medication or you don't complete the prep correctly, contact your doctor right away. He or she will inform you on how to finish the preparation so that your colonoscopy can still be performed.

Why is it Important to Complete a Bowel Preparation?

In order for your physician to give you a comprehensive evaluation of your colon, the bowels must be clean. It allows the doctor to easily view and analyze any irregularities. This is particularly important when it comes to colon polyps. Cancer and intestinal bleeding can be treated or prevented if the underlying causes are discovered in time. Carefully following your physician's guidelines for bowel prep will pave the way for a successful colonoscopy.

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