

What to know about colonoscopy prep drinks

Medically reviewed by [Cynthia Taylor Chavoustie, MPAS, PA-C](#) — Written by [Hana Ames](#) on May 27, 2021

[The drink](#) [Tips for drinking it](#) [Preparation timeline](#) [After the drink](#)
[The colonoscopy](#) [Summary](#)

Before a colonoscopy, a person needs to drink a special fluid that clears their bowels so that the doctor can spot any irregularities during the procedure.

A colonoscopy allows a doctor to see inside a person's bowels and assess any irregularities. At the start of the procedure, a healthcare professional inserts a long, thin tube with a light and camera at the end into the person's rectum.

Colonoscopy prep is essential. Without it, the doctor will be unable to see the bowels clearly and may need to repeat the procedure.

In this article, we discuss what colonoscopy prep drinks are and some strategies for drinking them. We also give a timeline of the overall preparation and describe what to expect on the day of the colonoscopy.

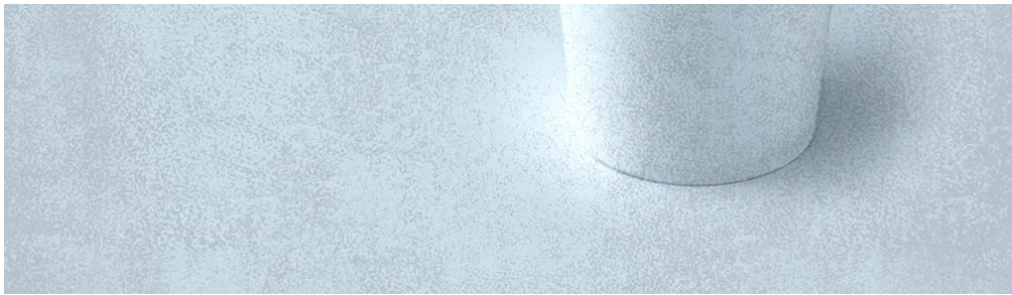
ADVERTISEMENT

What is the drink?



ADVERTISEMENT





gustavo ramirez/Getty Images

Colonoscopy prep drinks vary, depending on an individual's needs. Some come as powders that people mix in water. A doctor may recommend one of the following prep drinks:

- [GoLyte](#)
- [Colyte](#)
- [NuLyte](#)
- [TriLyte](#)
- [MoviPrep](#)
- [MiraLAX](#)
- [Suprep](#)

The instructions for use vary, and a doctor or a member of their team will give specific directions. They may also recommend an additional oral laxative. A healthcare professional recommends a preparation plan that is tailored to each person's situation.

People can usually combine their prep solution with a flavored sports drink to counteract the solution's saltiness. However, check with a healthcare professional before adding anything to the prep solution.

Tips for drinking the mixture

Colonoscopy prep drinks often contain flavoring, but not everyone likes the taste, and drinking enough of the mixture can be a struggle. The following strategies might help:

- **Split up the prep:** It is becoming [more common](#) for people to have half the mixture the night before their procedure and the remaining half the following morning.
- **Sip the drink:** Doctors often advise people to drink the mixture gradually throughout the day. This can be especially helpful if the drink causes nausea.

• **Chill it:** Some people report that the solution tastes worse when

ADVERTISEMENT



- **Use a straw:** Drinking it with a straw can help the mixture [bypass the taste buds](#).
- **Take a break:** Anyone who experiences nausea or vomiting should take a 30-minute break before trying the drink again. If a person vomits, they should drink as much as possible and tell a healthcare professional.

People should check with their doctor's staff about whether these strategies are suitable for their situation and the prescribed brand of prep solution.

ADVERTISEMENT

How to prepare for a colonoscopy

Drinking the solution is just one part of the preparation plan. In addition, a person may need to take the following steps:

1 week before

If a person has [diabetes](#) or takes other medications, the doctor [may alter](#) their dosage. This applies to people who take drugs that influence blood clotting, such as warfarin or over-the-counter medications such as [aspirin](#) or ibuprofen (Advil).

3 days before

Medical staff [typically](#) recommend that 3 days before a colonoscopy, a person should avoid:

- nuts
- seeds
- corn, including popcorn

Also, drink plenty of clear liquids and avoid anything with red, blue, or

ADVERTISEMENT



Some examples of liquids that are OK to drink include:

- pulp-free fruit juices, such as apple or white grape juice
- [coffee](#) or tea without milk or creamer
- clear broth or bouillon
- carbonated soft drinks
- Gatorade, Powerade, and similar light-colored drinks

2 days before

Start drinking at least [8 glasses](#) of water or other liquids a day to prevent dehydration.

1 day before

The day before a colonoscopy, people should not have solid food. A person can have unlimited amounts of clear liquids and those in the list above.

[Usually](#), a person starts drinking the prep solution at this time. Healthcare staff tend to recommend having half the night before and half on the morning of the colonoscopy.

The morning of the procedure

A person continues to have only clear liquids and no solid foods. By this point, they should be using the toilet regularly, and their stools should be clear.

Remember to stay hydrated. The preparation essentially involves giving a person [diarrhea](#), so it is important to drink plenty of fluids until 2 hours before the procedure.

What to expect after having the drink

Stay near a toilet while drinking the prep solution and afterward. The need to use the bathroom may come on suddenly and frequently.

The aim is to eventually pass only clear or slightly yellow-tinted liquid as bowel movements. This shows that the bowel is clear and that the procedure is likely to produce accurate results.

ADVERTISEMENT

ADVERTISEMENT



MEDICAL NEWS TODAY NEWSLETTER

Knowledge is power. Get our free daily newsletter.

Dig deeper into the health topics you care about most. Subscribe to our facts-first newsletter today.

SIGN UP NOW

Your privacy is important to us



MEDICAL NEWS TODAY



What to expect from the colonoscopy

On the day of the procedure, a doctor will explain the process and introduce the other healthcare professionals in the room.

The person will receive sedation medicine, and a healthcare professional will insert a thin, flexible tool called a colonoscope through their rectum. The scope sends images to a monitor, and the doctor uses this to examine the colon, looking for anything out of the ordinary. Using the same tool, they may remove polyps and take samples of tissue.

A person should not drive right after the procedure, as the anesthetic may still be in effect, so arrange for a ride home, if necessary. It can also be a good idea to take the rest of the day off to rest, if possible.

Summary

Drinking enough colonoscopy prep solution can be a challenge, but doing so helps ensure that the procedure is effective and leads to accurate findings.

The following strategies [can help](#) a person finish their prep drink:

- having half the night before and half on the morning of the colonoscopy

ADVERTISEMENT



- using a straw so that the drink bypasses the taste buds
- having regular breaks between sipping the drink

People may find the colonoscopy preparation and the procedure unpleasant. However, it is worth noting that the colonoscopy may need repeating if a person does not take the prep correctly.

ADVERTISEMENT

東京大学教授が教える教養

3,500本以上の動画が1カ月無料で見放題／経済・歴史・哲学など幅広い講義を今すぐ見る

テンミニッツTV

Last medically reviewed on May 27, 2021

GastroIntestinal / Gastroenterology Medical Devices / Diagnostics Primary Care

+ 14 sources



FEEDBACK: 😞 😊

How should you prepare for a colonoscopy?

Medically reviewed by [Mikhail Yakubov, MD](#) — Written by [Rachel Nall, MSN, CRNA](#) — Updated on May 3, 2021

[Preparation](#) [What to expect](#) [Results](#) [Risks](#) [Summary](#)

A colonoscopy is a type of imaging study in which a doctor uses a particular scope called a colonoscope to examine the colon's lining. The doctor can also remove polyps or tissue for a biopsy at the same time.

A doctor may recommend a colonoscopy to evaluate the colon for cancerous lesions, identify areas of bleeding, or diagnose other gut-

ADVERTISEMENT



Before the procedure, a doctor will prescribe a colonoscopy preparation. There are various approaches, but they all aim to empty the colon of fecal matter so that a doctor can view it clearly. The preparation may start up to a week before the colonoscopy.

The colonoscopy procedure involves inserting a thin scope with a light on the end into the rectum. The doctor will advance the scope through the colon to examine it.

In this article, we look at how to prepare for a colonoscopy appointment and what to expect before, during, and after the procedure.

ADVERTISEMENT

How to prepare for a colonoscopy



Peter Cade/Getty Images

In the week before the procedure, the person will follow [several steps](#). It is essential to prepare as recommended because incomplete preparation [can affect](#) the results.

It may mean canceling the procedure. If the colonoscopy goes ahead, the

ADVERTISEMENT



One week before

A doctor is likely to recommend specific dietary changes in the week leading up to a colonoscopy.

While canned or cooked vegetables are acceptable to eat, people should avoid the following foods during this week:

- grains, including brown rice, oatmeal, and wheat bread
- nuts
- seeds, including poppy or sesame seeds
- whole kernel corn
- raw fruits and vegetables

A doctor may also recommend that people stop taking certain medications that could increase the risk of bleeding during a colonoscopy. Examples include blood thinners, such as warfarin and clopidogrel, and [nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs \(NSAIDs\)](#), such as ibuprofen.

The gastroenterologist will work with the individual during the consultation to decide how long they should suspend using a specific medication before and after the colonoscopy.

The consultation also is a good time to ask any questions about the procedure, including the risks and benefits.

Two days before

At this point, people should drink plenty of water or other liquids to ensure that they do not become dehydrated when they begin their bowel prep. Drinking around [eight](#) 8-ounce glasses of water a day can help reduce the risk of [dehydration](#).

A doctor may also recommend avoiding red or orange foods at this point, as they could make a person's colon look like it is bleeding.

24 hours before

It is crucial to consume only clear liquids in the 24 hours leading up to the colonoscopy.

Examples of acceptable clear liquids include:

- clear broth or bouillon


ADVERTISEMENT



- gelatin
- popsicles
- strained fruit juices without pulp

Here, [get some tips on following a clear liquid diet](#).

In general, if it is possible to see through the food or drink, it should be acceptable within a clear liquid diet. However, a person should always consult their doctor if they have any questions about specific foods.

A doctor will often prescribe an oral solution to drink to help clean out the colon. This solution will cause the person to have frequent bowel movements until there is no fecal matter left in their colon. Examples of oral solutions [include](#)  GoLyte, Colyte, NuLyte, TriLyte, Suprep, and Clenpiq.

These solutions are likely to have different dosage methods. Sometimes, a doctor will prescribe drinking the entire solution the night before the colonoscopy. Other times, they will recommend drinking one portion of the solution the night before and the remainder on the day of the examination.

The solution is intended to make a person go to the bathroom. Their bowel movements will turn into [diarrhea](#).

The bowel prep can sometimes make a person feel nauseous, bloated, thirsty, or dizzy. If this occurs, the individual should give themselves a break of at least [30 minutes](#) from drinking the prep and slowly sip on clear fluids. If they can tolerate returning to drinking the prep, they should.

With a doctor's permission, a person potentially can add a powdered drink solution that is not red, blue, or purple to the prep to improve its taste.

During the bowel prep, a person may benefit from:

- staying near a bathroom so that they can go to the toilet easily
- wearing elastic-waist pants that are easier to pull down
- drinking clear liquids after swallowing the prep to remove the unpleasant taste
- applying petroleum jelly around the anal opening or using baby wipes to reduce irritation to the anus

The bowel movements will eventually turn clear or yellow. This change signals that a person's colon is likely to be clear of fecal matter.

ADVERTISEMENT



In case of problems with [constipation](#), a doctor may also recommend using a stool softener to make stools easier to pass.

What to expect at a colonoscopy appointment

By the time of the colonoscopy appointment, a doctor will expect a person to be passing only clear to yellow-tinted liquid from the bowel.

The individual's doctor will explain the procedure. The person will also meet the nursing staff who will be in the room with them during their colonoscopy, as well as anesthesia representatives who will be providing sedation.

A member of the medical staff will insert an intravenous (IV) catheter into the person's vein so they can receive medications during the procedure.

The person will then go to the colonoscopy suite. An anesthesiologist who is part of the procedure team will administer sedatives to the person via the IV and be responsible for keeping their airway safe throughout the procedure.

Once the person is sedated, a doctor will insert the colonoscope through the rectum and advance it to begin the examination. They will look for irregularities in the colon's lining.

The gastroenterologist will evaluate each polyp individually. Based on its size, shape, and location, the doctor will determine the best technique to remove the polyp. They may also take a sample of tissue for testing in the laboratory, known as a biopsy.

Ideally, a person's colon prep will be so effective that a doctor can advance the colonoscope far enough into the colon to see where the small and large intestines join.

When the doctor has completed the examination, they will remove the scope. The anesthesia professional will stop administering medication, and the person will wake up.

It is not unusual to feel sleepy or groggy after the procedure. For that reason, a person should always have someone else available to drive them home from the appointment.

ADVERTISEMENT

ADVERTISEMENT



Results after a colonoscopy appointment

After a colonoscopy, the person may have to attend another appointment to discuss the results or any findings of tests.

During the appointment, the doctor will explain any findings. This might include reviewing images from the colonoscopy.

Possible [results](#) may be:

- **Negative:** There are no growths or polyps.
- **Growths or polyps:** The doctor has removed polyps and may wish to follow up after testing.
- **Bowel cancer:** The doctor may have taken a biopsy. If they suspect cancer, they will talk to the individual about what to do next.
- **Other conditions:** If there are signs of Crohn's disease, diverticulitis, ulcerative colitis, or another condition, the doctor will discuss the next steps with the person.

If a colonoscopy is positive, meaning cancerous or precancerous cells are present, the doctor may recommend further interventions. These can include additional colonoscopies or even surgery.

[MEDICAL NEWS TODAY NEWSLETTER](#)

Knowledge is power. Get our free daily newsletter.

Dig deeper into the health topics you care about most. Subscribe to our facts-first newsletter today.

[SIGN UP NOW](#)

Your [privacy](#) is important to us

Risks from a colonoscopy

There are some risks involved in a colonoscopy. The doctor should explain these to the person before the procedure.

ADVERTISEMENT



- complications relating to anesthesia
- rectal tears
- bleeding
- pain
- bloating
- infection
- post-polypectomy electrocoagulation syndrome (PPES)
- colon wall perforation

Severe complications are rare, and experts consider the procedure relatively safe.

PPES can cause severe abdominal pain several hours after the procedure. Treatment usually involves bowel rest and antibiotics.

ADVERTISEMENT

Summary

Colonoscopy preparation can be unpleasant but is vital for ensuring a successful procedure.

If the results are not clear, the person may need to repeat the procedure.

For this reason, a person should follow the preparation plan. A doctor will make follow-up recommendations if the colonoscopy shows that further investigation or treatment is necessary.

ADVERTISEMENT

ADVERTISEMENT



Last medically reviewed on May 3, 2021

Colorectal Cancer Cancer / Oncology Gastrointestinal / Gastroenterology
Medical Devices / Diagnostics

+ 6 sources



FEEDBACK:  

RELATED COVERAGE

What to expect before, during, and after a colonoscopy

Medically reviewed by [Harshil Matta, DO](#)

Find what to expect before, during, and after a colonoscopy. We also discuss how much the procedure costs and when a person might need to have one.

[READ MORE](#)

Foods you can eat after a colonoscopy

Medically reviewed by [Saurabh Sethi, M.D., MPH](#)

After having a colonoscopy, a person's digestive system will require some time to recover. For a couple of days after the procedure, people will

ADVERTISEMENT



[READ MORE](#)

Does Medicare cover colonoscopy?

Medically reviewed by [Debra Sullivan, Ph.D., MSN, R.N., CNE, COI](#)

Medicare is a government-funded insurance plan. It provides some coverage for colonoscopies and routine screening based on a person's risk of colon...

[READ MORE](#)



Get our newsletter

Keep up with the ever-changing world of medical science with new and emerging developments in health.

SUBSCRIBE

Your [privacy](#) is important to us

- Editorial articles

Newsletters

Ad Policy

Contact us

Privacy Settings

All news topics
- Knowledge Center

About us

Privacy

Terms



[About](#) | [Careers](#) | [Advertise with us](#)

OUR BRANDS

- [Healthline](#)
- [Medical News Today](#)
- [Greatist](#)
- [Psych Central](#)

ADVERTISEMENT

