Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Bowel Preparation for Your Orthopedic Surgery

This information explains how to do a bowel preparation for your orthopedic surgery. A bowel preparation is when you clean out your colon (large intestine). It's often called bowel prep.

It's important that your colon is clean and empty before your orthopedic surgery. Follow the instructions in this resource to do your bowel prep.

Buy supplies

Buy these supplies from any pharmacy. You don't need a prescription.

- 1 (10-ounce) bottle of liquid magnesium citrate.
- 2 bisacodyl or saline enemas, such as Fleet® bisacodyl or saline enemas.
- Clear liquids. Examples are listed in the "Clear liquid diet" table.

2 days before your surgery

Drink 1 full bottle of magnesium citrate at 9 p.m. 2 days before your surgery.

1 day before your surgery

- Start following a clear liquid diet. A clear liquid diet includes only liquids you can see through. The “Clear liquid diet” table has examples.
- Give yourself an enema in the morning. Follow the instructions on the package.
- Give yourself another enema 1 hour before you go to bed.

While you’re following a clear liquid diet:

- Do not eat any solid foods.
- Try to drink at least 1 (8-ounce) cup of clear liquid every hour while you’re awake.
- Drink different types of clear liquids. Don’t just drink water, black coffee, and tea.
- Do not drink sugar-free clear liquids unless you have diabetes and a member of your care team tells you to.

For people with diabetes

If you have diabetes, ask the healthcare provider who manages your diabetes what you should do while you're following a clear liquid diet.

- If you take insulin or another medication for diabetes, ask if you need to change the dose.
- Ask if you should drink sugar-free clear liquids.

Make sure to check your blood sugar level often while you're following a clear liquid diet. If you have any questions, talk with your healthcare provider.

Clear liquid diet

Here are examples of things you can and cannot drink while following a clear liquid diet.

Clear liquid diet		
	OK to have	Do not have
Soups	• Clear broth, bouillon, and consommé.	• Anything with pieces of food or seasoning.
Sweets	• Gelatin, such as Jell-O®. • Flavored ices. • Hard candies, such as Life Savers®, lemon drops, and peppermints.	• All other sweets.

Drinks	• Clear fruit juices, such as lemonade, apple, cranberry, and grape juices. • Soda, such as ginger ale, 7UP®, Sprite®, and seltzer. • Sports drinks, such as Gatorade® and Powerade®. • Black coffee or plain tea without milk or creamer. • Water, including carbonated (fizzy) and flavored water. • Clear nutritional drinks, such as Boost® Breeze, Ensure Clear™, Pedialyte®, and Diabetishield®.	• Juices with pulp. • Nectars. • Smoothies or shakes. • Milk, cream, and other dairy products. • Nut milks, plant milks, non-dairy creamers, and other dairy alternatives. • Drinks with alcohol.

The day of your surgery

Instructions for drinking

Important: If you take a GLP-1 medicine, do not follow these instructions. Follow the instructions in *Eating and Drinking Before Your Surgery or Procedure When Taking GLP-1 Medicines* (www.mskcc.org/pe/eat-drink-glp1) instead.

Between midnight (12 a.m.) and 2 hours before your arrival time, only drink the liquids on the list below. Do not eat or drink anything else. Stop drinking 2 hours before your arrival time.

- Water.
- Clear apple juice, clear grape juice, or clear cranberry juice.
- Gatorade or Powerade.
- Black coffee or plain tea. It's OK to add sugar. Do not add anything else.
  - Do not add any amount of any type of milk or creamer. This includes plant-based milks and creamers.
  - Do not add flavored syrup.

If you have diabetes, pay attention to the amount of sugar in your drinks. It's easier to control your blood sugar levels if you include sugar-free, low-sugar, or no added sugar

versions of these drinks.

It's helpful to stay hydrated before surgeries and procedures, so drink if you're thirsty. Do not drink more than you need. You'll get intravenous (IV) fluids during your surgery or procedure.



Stop drinking 2 hours before your arrival time. This includes water.

Your healthcare provider may have given you different instructions for when to stop drinking. If so, follow their instructions.

If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

Bowel Preparation for Your Orthopedic Surgery - Last updated on December 12, 2022
All rights owned and reserved by Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center