How to Prepare for Your Colonoscopy Using MiraLAX®

This information will help you get ready for your colonoscopy using polyethylene glycol (MiraLAX®).

A colonoscopy is an exam of your colon (large intestine). Your doctor will use a colonoscope (flexible tube with a camera on the end) to see the inside of your colon on a video monitor. During your procedure, your doctor can:

- Remove a small sample of tissue (biopsy) for testing
- Remove a polyp (growth of tissue)
- Take photos of the inside of your colon

Follow these instructions carefully. It’s very important that your colon is empty for your colonoscopy. If there’s stool inside your colon, your doctor may not be able to see polyps or other problems inside your colon and you may have to repeat the procedure. If you have any questions, contact your doctor’s office.

1 Week Before Your Procedure

Ask about your medications

You may need to stop taking some of your medications before your procedure. Talk with your doctor about which medications are safe for you to stop taking. We have included some common examples below.

Anticoagulants (blood thinners)

If you take a blood thinner, such as to treat blood clots or to prevent a heart attack or stroke, ask the doctor who prescribes it for you when to stop taking it. Examples are listed in the “Common anticoagulants (blood thinners)” table. There are others, so check with your doctor if you’re not sure.
### Common anticoagulants (blood thinners)

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### Medications for diabetes

If you take insulin or other medications for diabetes, you may need to change the dose. Ask the doctor who prescribes your diabetes medication what you should do the day before and the morning of your procedure. Tell your doctor you will be drinking a sugar-free clear liquid diet the day before your procedure.

If you take metformin (such as Glucophage® or Glumetza®) or a medication that contains metformin (such as Janumet®), don’t take it the day before or the day of your procedure.

### Tell your doctor if you have an AICD

Tell your Memorial Sloan Kettering (MSK) doctor if you have an automatic implantable cardioverter-defibrillator (AICD). If you have this device, you will need to have your procedure done at Memorial Hospital (MSK’s main hospital).

### Get a letter from your doctor, if needed

- If you have an automatic implantable cardioverter-defibrillator (AICD), you will need to get a clearance letter from your cardiologist (heart doctor) before your procedure.

- If you’ve had chest pain, dizziness, trouble breathing that’s new or worse, or have fainted in the last 6 weeks, you will need to get a clearance letter from your doctor before your procedure.

Your MSK doctor’s office must receive your clearance letter at least 1 day before your procedure.

### Arrange for someone to take you home

You must have a responsible care partner take you home after your procedure. Make sure to plan this before the day of your procedure.

If you don’t have someone to take you home, call one of the agencies below.
They will send someone to go home with you. There’s usually a charge for this service, and you will need to provide transportation.

**Agencies in New York**
Partners in Care: 888-735-8913
Caring People: 877-227-4649

**Agencies in New Jersey**
Caring People: 877-227-4649

**Avoid certain foods**
Starting 1 week before your colonoscopy, do not eat:

- Raw (fresh) fruits and vegetables. You can have canned or cooked vegetables.
- Whole kernel corn, including canned corn
- Whole grains (such as oatmeal, brown rice, quinoa, or wheat bread)
- Seeds (such as poppy or sesame)
- Nuts

**Buy supplies**

- 4 (5 mg) tablets of bisacodyl (Dulcolax®). These are usually sold as a box of 10 tablets.
- 1 (238 gram) bottle of polyethylene glycol (MiraLAX®).
- 64 ounces of any clear liquid that isn’t red, purple, or orange.
  - A sports drink like Gatorade® or Powerade® is a good choice. Sports drinks will help replace electrolytes that you will lose during the bowel preparation.
  - If you have diabetes, be sure to get sugar-free clear liquids.

To see if you need any additional supplies, answer the questions below:

- Do you tend to be constipated (have fewer bowel movements than what’s normal for you) or have fewer than 3 bowel movements per week?
- Do you take narcotic (opioid) medications such as fentanyl (Duragesic®, Subsys®) morphine (DepoDur®, Duramorph®), hydrocodone (Vicodin®, MS Contin®), or oxycodone (Oxycontin®, Percocet®)? If you’re not sure, ask
your healthcare provider.

- Have you had a colonoscopy with a poor prep in the past?

If you answered yes to any of the questions, you must also buy the following supplies:

- 3 (17 gram) doses of MiraLAX (for a total of 51 grams).
  - You can either buy 1 additional small bottle or the packets.
- Additional liquids for a full liquid diet.
  - Examples of what you can drink are listed in the section called “2 Days Before Your Procedure.”

## 5 Days Before Your Procedure

### Stop taking iron supplements

If you take an iron supplement, you’ll need to stop taking it 5 days before your procedure. Iron supplements can cause color changes in your stool, which can make it harder for your doctor to see your colon clearly.

## 3 Days Before Your Procedure

A few days before your procedure, you’ll get a telephone call from an endoscopy nurse. They will review the instructions in this guide with you and ask you questions about your medical history. The nurse will also review your medications and tell you which to take the morning of your procedure. Use the space below to write them down.
2 Days Before Your Procedure

If you aren’t usually constipated, don’t take narcotic (opioid) medications, or haven’t had a colonoscopy with poor prep in the past, you don’t need to start your clear liquid diet until the day before your procedure. However, continue to avoid raw fruits and vegetables, whole kernel corn, grains, seeds, and nuts. Skip to the next section “The Day Before Your Procedure.”

If you’re usually constipated, take narcotic medications, or have had a colonoscopy with a poor prep in the past:

- Take 1 capful (17 grams) of MiraLAX mixed with 8 ounces of liquid at breakfast, lunch, and dinner.
- Follow a full liquid diet, including:
  - Yogurt (without any pieces of fruit)
  - Fruit juices without pulp
  - Soda
  - Broth or strained cream soups
  - Nutritional supplements
  - Ice cream and fruit ices (without any pieces of fruit)

The Day Before Your Procedure

Prepare your MiraLAX bowel preparation

On the morning of the day before your procedure, mix all 238 grams of the MiraLAX powder with 64 ounces of a room temperature clear liquid until the MiraLAX powder dissolves. Once the MiraLAX is dissolved, you can put the mixture in the refrigerator. Many people find it tastes better chilled.

Don’t mix the MiraLAX earlier than the morning of the day before your procedure.

Follow a clear liquid diet

You will need to follow a clear liquid diet the day before your procedure. Examples of clear liquids are listed in the table in this section.
• Don’t eat any solid foods.
• Don’t drink anything red, purple, or orange.
• Make sure to drink plenty of liquids in addition to water, coffee, and tea. This helps to make sure that you get enough calories and is an important part of your colonoscopy preparation. Try to drink at least 1 (8-ounce) glass every hour while you’re awake.
• If you have diabetes, you should drink only sugar-free clear liquids and check your blood sugar level often. If you have any questions, talk with your healthcare provider.

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**Note the time of your procedure**

A staff member will call you after 11:00 AM the day before your procedure. The staff member will tell you what time you should arrive for your procedure. If you’re scheduled for your procedure on a Monday, you will be called on the Friday before. If you don’t receive a call, call your doctor’s office.

If you need to cancel your procedure, call the doctor who scheduled it for you.

**Start your bowel preparation**
Step 1: Take 2 bisacodyl tablets

At 4:00 PM on the day before your procedure, take 2 bisacodyl tablets by mouth with a glass of water.

Step 2: Drink the MiraLAX mixture

At 4:15 PM, drink 1 (8-ounce) glass of the mixture. Do this every 15 minutes for a total of 4 times. Drink the mixture at 4:15 PM, 4:30 PM, 4:45 PM, and 5:00 PM.

- When you’re finished, half of the MiraLAX mixture will be left. Save the rest of it in the refrigerator for the second half of your preparation.
- Bowel movements usually begin within 1 hour of drinking the first dose, but it may take longer for some people.
  - Don’t worry if you don’t start having bowel movements after drinking the first half of the MiraLAX. Continue to drink liquids and start the second half of the MiraLAX as instructed.
- Apply petroleum jelly (Vaseline®) or A & D® ointment to the skin around your anus after every bowel movement. This helps prevent irritation.
- Continue to drink clear liquids to stay hydrated and flush out your colon.

Step 3 (If you were told to arrive for your procedure before 11:00 AM):

If you were told to arrive for your procedure before 11:00 AM, follow these instructions the night before your procedure:

At 11:00 PM, take 2 bisacodyl tablets by mouth with a glass of water. Then, start drinking the second half of the MiraLAX mixture. Drink 1 (8-ounce) glass every 15 minutes until you finish the bottle.

- If you don’t start having bowel movements after 2 to 3 hours of drinking the second half of the MiraLAX, call 212-639-2000 and ask to speak to the GI fellow on call.
- You can continue to drink clear liquids until 4 hours before your scheduled arrival time.
- Don’t eat anything until after your procedure.
The Day of Your Procedure

**Step 3 (If you were told to arrive for your procedure at 11:00 AM or later):**

If you were told to arrive for your procedure at 11:00 AM or later, follow these instructions the morning of your procedure:

At **6:00 AM**, take 2 bisacodyl tablets by mouth with a glass of water. Then, start drinking the second half of the MiraLAX mixture. Drink 1 (8-ounce) glass every 15 minutes until you finish the bottle.

- If you don’t start having bowel movements after 2 to 3 hours after drinking the second half of the MiraLAX mixture, call 212-639-2000 and ask to speak to the gastrointestinal (GI) fellow on call.
- You can continue to drink clear liquids until 4 hours before your scheduled arrival time.
- Don’t eat anything until after your procedure.

**Things to remember**

- Take only the medications you were instructed to take the morning of your procedure. Take them with a few sips of water.
- Don’t apply any lotions, creams, or powder to your chest or arms.
- Remove any jewelry, including body piercings.
- Leave all valuables, such as credit cards and jewelry, at home. We don’t have lockers to store your valuables in.
- If you wear contacts, wear your glasses instead.

**What to bring with you**

- A list of the medications you take at home
- If you have an implanted pacemaker or cardioverter-defibrillator (AICD), bring your wallet card with you if it isn’t already on file with the hospital.
- Your rescue inhaler (such as albuterol (Proventil®, Ventolin®) for asthma), if you have one
Where to go

Your procedure will take place at one of these locations:

- **Endoscopy Suite at Memorial Hospital (MSK’s main hospital)**
  1275 York Avenue (between East 67th and East 68th Streets)
  New York, NY 10065
  Take the M elevator to the 2nd Floor. Enter the Endoscopy Suite through the glass doors.

- **MSK Monmouth**
  480 Red Hill Road
  Middletown, NJ 07748

What to expect

Once you arrive, you will be asked to state and spell your name and date of birth many times. This is for your safety. People with the same or similar names may be having procedures on the same day.

When it’s time to change for your procedure, you will get a hospital gown, robe, and nonskid socks to wear.

You will meet with your doctor before your procedure. They will explain the procedure to you and answer any questions you may have.

You will meet with your anesthesiologist. They will review your medical history with you and talk with you about the kind of anesthesia (medication to make you sleep) you will receive.

Once it’s time for your procedure, you will be brought into the procedure room and helped onto the exam table. You will lie on your left side with your knees bent.

Your anesthesiologist will place an intravenous (IV) line into a vein, usually in your arm or hand. You will get anesthesia through your IV, which will make you fall asleep. Once you’re asleep, your doctor will examine your rectum.
Your doctor will place a colonoscope into your rectum. The colonoscope is connected to a video monitor. This allows your doctor to see the inside of your colon. Your doctor will use air and fluid to move the colonoscope along the length of your colon while looking for anything unusual on the video monitor.

**After Your Procedure**

Your nurse will continue to monitor your heart, breathing, and blood pressure. Many people feel bloated and have stomach cramps after a colonoscopy. This is normal and goes away by passing gas.

Once you’re fully awake, your nurse will remove your IV. If you have someone waiting with you, your nurse will explain your discharge instructions to both of you before you go home.

**At home**

- You may begin eating light foods as soon as you’re discharged. Work your way up to your normal diet. If your doctor wants you to limit your diet for a period of time, they will tell you.
- You can go back to doing your usual activities 24 hours after your procedure.
- Don’t drink alcoholic beverages for 24 hours after your procedure.

If you had a biopsy, it’s normal to have a small amount of bleeding from your rectum. There should be no more than a few drops of blood, and the bleeding should stop within 24 hours after your procedure.

After a colonoscopy, it’s normal for your bowel movements to be irregular or different from your usual habits. This may last for up to a week after your procedure.

**Call Your Doctor or Nurse if You Have:**

- A temperature of 101°F (38.3°C) or higher
- Severe stomach pain or bloating
- Bleeding from your rectum that lasts more than 24 hours
- Bleeding between bowel movements
- Weakness, faintness, or nausea
- Heavy bleeding from your rectum

If you have any questions, contact a member of your healthcare team directly. If you're a patient at MSK and you need to reach a provider after 5:00 PM, during the weekend, or on a holiday, call 212-639-2000.

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