



**GASTROENTEROLOGY**  
PATIENT & FAMILY  
EDUCATION



# PREPARING FOR A **GASTROSCOPY / COLONOSCOPY**



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# GASTROSCOPY / COLONOSCOPY

It's normal to worry when your doctor recommends an investigative scope. However, such scopes are one of the most common and effective ways for your doctor to investigate symptoms affecting your digestive tract, and advise if treatment is needed. The benefits and peace of mind from these procedures outweigh the risks, which are minimal.

There are 2 main types of scope procedures: gastroscopy and colonoscopy. We explain these scopes in detail and how to prepare for one.

## What is a Gastroscopy?

A gastroscopy explores the **upper part of your digestive tract, from the stomach to the upper part of small intestine (duodenum)**. Your doctor will gently guide an endoscope into your mouth, and down into your oesophagus to reach the stomach and duodenum.



This allows your doctor to look out for the exact causes of the abdominal pain, vomiting and other symptoms you may be experiencing. Stomach ulcers and gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) are common causes and can be treated once diagnosed.



**Duration:**  
15 minutes

## What is a Colonoscopy?

A colonoscopy is performed to examine the **lower part of your digestive tract, which consists of the large intestine (colon) and the rectum**.

During this procedure, an endoscope is gently inserted through the anus and guided into the colon.



Your doctor will look out for signs of inflammation, bleeding or small growths (polyps) as they may point to Crohn's disease or colon cancer. A colonoscopy also investigates symptoms such as blood in the stools and chronic diarrhoea.



**Duration:**  
30 minutes

Procedure is performed under sedation to make the process more comfortable and no pain will be felt during the procedure.

## How to prepare for a scope

Before undergoing a scope, speak to your doctor about any medication, supplements or traditional remedies you are taking. Your doctor will advise if any of them should be temporarily stopped before the procedure.

### Preparing for a gastroscopy

You will need to avoid intake of food and drinks for at least 6 hours before the procedure to ensure an empty stomach. This will give your doctor a clearer view of the inside of your stomach and duodenum. This also reduces the risk of vomiting after the procedure.

### Preparing for a colonoscopy

You will need to adjust your diet before the scope, and undergo bowel prep to completely clear your bowels. This will allow your doctor to see the insides of your large intestine with greater clarity. Preparing for a colonoscopy is more specific than preparing for a gastroscopy, and here are some tips to help you through it.

#### ■ 5 days prior to a colonoscopy

Adjusting your diet a few days beforehand will help improve the chances of a successful procedure. Avoid fried and fatty foods, tough or processed meats, grains and other high-fibre foods that take longer to digest. This table recommends foods to consider and what to avoid.

#### Food to Consider



##### Fruits and vegetables (well-cooked and without seeds)

- ✓ Green beans
- ✓ Mushrooms
- ✓ Potatoes, peeled
- ✓ Bananas
- ✓ Canned fruits, without the skin
- ✓ Vegetables / fruit juices without skin, seeds or pulp
- ✓ Cream-based soups



##### Meat

- ✓ Small, lean cuts of beef, chicken or lamb
- ✓ Fish



##### Carbohydrates

- ✓ White rice or porridge
- ✓ Pasta with less than 1g of fibre per serving



##### Fats and oils

- ✓ Butter, margarine
- ✓ Mayonnaise
- ✓ Cream

#### Food to Avoid



##### Fruits and vegetables

- ✗ Broccoli
- ✗ Peas
- ✗ Bean sprouts
- ✗ Raw / leafy vegetables
- ✗ Berries, raisins or figs
- ✗ Seeds and nuts, including crunchy peanut butter
- ✗ Vegetable or fruit juices with pulp



##### Meat

- ✗ Smoked or cured meats



##### Whole grain products

- ✗ Bread
- ✗ Cereal
- ✗ Crackers
- ✗ Unpolished / brown rice



##### Beverages

- ✗ Drinks with added malt

## ■ The day before a colonoscopy

Observe a liquid-only diet. Take plain water, sports drinks and clear broths, and avoid cream-based foods and beverages like smoothies and porridge.



**Procedure scheduled in the morning:** Make the switch at least 8 hours prior, or the night before.

**Procedure scheduled in the afternoon:** Begin your liquid diet when you wake up in the morning.

Begin your bowel prep and complete your prescribed dose of laxatives to ensure that your bowels are completely emptied.



Some doctors advise splitting the laxative dose, taking half in the evening and the balance 6 hours before the procedure. Depending on when your procedure is scheduled, follow your doctor's directions on when you should take your laxative, and finish the prescribed dose.

The laxative works quickly and you will pass motion several times. Expect the consistency of your stools to change from solid to watery, and eventually to a clear or pale, yellowish fluid. It is common to experience some cramping, bloating, nausea or vomiting during this time.



To mask its strong taste, you may mix the laxative with a sports drink, flavour it with ginger or lime, take it chilled, or sip it through a straw.



Using moist wipes and diaper cream will help to soothe the discomfort from frequent cleaning.

## On the day of the scope



Plan to arrive early so that you can be prepped for the procedure. You will not be allowed any food or drink (even water) from 2 hours before the start of your scope. It is important for you to follow this instruction to avoid feeling unwell after your procedure.

## After your scope



You will be in an observation room to rest and recover while the nurses monitor you for any ill effects. Once the doctor gives the all clear, you can be discharged. Arrange in advance for someone to take you home in case you feel unwell once the sedation wears off.



Mild cramping or bloating is normal, and you can eat normally on the same day, however it is advisable to do so gradually and to avoid heavy, greasy foods immediately. Most people get back to their normal routine by the next day.

## Gastroscopy and Colonoscopy risks

Both procedures are generally safe and well-tolerated by patients without any major side effects. You may experience some discomfort in the throat and stomach following a gastroscopy but these are usually temporary. In rare cases, some patients may experience bleeding or adverse reactions to the sedative. Any severe pain, fever or bleeding should be immediately highlighted to your doctor.

## EARLY DIAGNOSIS IS IMPORTANT



**While it is natural to feel anxious about getting a gastroscopy or colonoscopy, they are safe and relatively pain-free. In fact, a scope is an important way to detect potentially serious conditions, so don't put it off because treatment is most effective when diseases are diagnosed early.**

**Let us support you as you take this important step to protect your health.**

For more information, speak to us at:

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