

# COLON & RECTAL SURGERY OF NEW ENGLAND

## **Bowel Preparation**

*What is a bowel prep?*

A bowel preparation is a cathartic agent which is prescribed prior to several types of procedures. There are many different bowel preparations. If you are prescribed a bowel preparation before your surgery, you will be given a prescription and instructions.

*Why do I need a bowel prep?*

There are several reasons for a bowel preparation. If you are having a bowel prep for a colonoscopy, your surgeon needs the inside of your colon to be free of particulate material so that he can do the best examination possible. If you are having a bowel preparation for surgery, you want your colon to have as little bacteria as possible to reduce the risk of infection. A bowel prep is ordered because we do not want the surgical site to be traumatized with hard stool that can result in a failure of your surgical procedure.

*What can I eat or drink during a bowel preparation?*

You may eat a light breakfast on the day you start your bowel preparation. Once you start the bowel preparation at the time you were instructed, you should drink only clear liquids. During bowel preparation, it is important to drink plenty of liquids to keep hydrated as the bowel prep can be severely dehydrating.

If your bowel preparation is for colonoscopy, it is best to avoid drinking liquids that are red or purple in color. If your bowel preparation is for any other procedure, you may drink any clear liquid.

*Do I have to drink a big gallon of liquid or are there other options?*

There are three bowel preps that we use at Colon & Rectal Surgery of New England.

- One is a series of pills that are taken on a schedule. This is available for healthy individuals with normal kidney function.
- The other is drinking ½ gallon of solution that you will consume on a schedule. This option is for patients with diabetes, kidney disease or other medical problems.
- As a last resort for patients who cannot take either of these bowel preps, is a 1 gallon liquid solution that is also consumed on a schedule. All of these will cause

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you to have many bowel movements to clean the colon. Your doctor will determine which the appropriate prep is for you.

*How can I minimize discomfort during my bowel prep?*

Applying Vaseline or a zinc oxide based diaper cream to the perianal skin between bowel movements may help decrease the risk of irritation. Adequate hydration during bowel preparation will help prevent the development of hemorrhoids.

Please call the office if you have any questions about your bowel preparation. ***Your procedure may be postponed or canceled if the prep is not done properly***

*Call our office if you have any questions or concerns.*

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