

Diagnostic Imaging Department

PREPARATION FOR CT VIRTUAL COLONOSCOPY

Virtual Colonoscopy (VC), also referred to as CT colonography or CTC, is an exam used for colon polyp screening. The entire inner surface of the colon can be seen with VC. A computed tomography (CT) or “CAT” scan creates images of the inside of your colon. VC Allows the doctor to see your colon and to take a limited look outside the colon for problems in the abdomen and pelvis. The main purpose of this exam is to screen for growths (polyps) in the lining of the large intestine (colon and rectum).

To prepare for this exam, you must clean your colon. Follow the guidelines outlined below to ensure that your bowel is well prepared.

What to Expect

The VC exam usually takes 15 minutes or less to complete. You will not need pain or sedation medicine. We may inject a medication to relax the bowel through an intravenous line (IV). You will be asked to change into a hospital gown for the exam. You will be taken to a CT exam room where you will lie on a CT exam table. A small, flexible tube (smaller than a pinky finger) will be gently placed on a very short distance into your rectum (the feeling is like have a digital rectal exam). Carbon dioxide will be placed slowly into your colon. The exam should not be painful, though you may have some abdominal fullness, discomfort, or cramping during the exam. You may feel the urge to have a bowel movement. These feelings should go away as soon as the exam is over. CT images are taken of your abdomen and pelvis while you are lying on your back and then on your stomach. Each time you move, you will be asked to hold your breath for about 10 seconds while the CT scanner takes pictures.

Bowel Preparation

Follow the instructions below very carefully. These are designed to minimize discomfort while producing a clean bowel. If your bowel is not completely clean, the test may have to be repeated. More importantly, remaining stool can hide serious conditions that may be present. **If you have any questions about these instructions, contact your family physician or the Diagnostic Imaging Department where your CT is scheduled.**

All previously scheduled medicines are to be taken on regular schedule. Patients with diabetes should contact their doctor regarding their medications. Typically, insulin dose on the morning of the exam is halved and oral pills held until after the exam. Regularly check blood sugar levels.

STEP 1: AT LEAST THREE DAYS BEFORE YOUR EXAM

To be picked up at one of the Diagnostic Imaging Departments listed below.

Preparation Kit:

450 mL Readi-Cat Barium

60 mL Gastrografin

Note: Barium and Gastrografin should be stored at room temperature.

To be purchased at a pharmacy 2 days prior to the examination:

1 box of PICO-SALAX. You may have to ask for this from pharmacist but it does not require a prescription.

STEP 2: TWO DAYS BEFORE YOUR EXAMINATION:

After a normal evening meal, follow these instructions (i.e. if your CT appointment is booked on Wednesday, start these instructions on Monday evening):

1. **Start liquid diet.** This includes water, juices without pulp such as white grape juice or apple juice, decaffeinated coffee, decaffeinated soft drinks, ice pops, and weak tea without milk or cream. Broth, bouillon, sports drinks and any CLEAR nutritional drink (i.e., Ensure Clear, Boost FRUIT flavored beverage) are acceptable clear fluids. **Avoid all milk products.** Do not drink just water as you may feel weak or faint.
2. **Take normal medications as directed.** If you are on insulin, ask your physician about dose modifications.

STEP 3: THE DAY BEFORE YOUR TEST:

Breakfast:

1. **Dissolve first package of Pico-Salax** in a glass of **cold** water stirring constantly for two to three minutes until all is dissolved. If the solution heats while stirring, let it cool or add more cold water before drinking. Drink this glass, followed by an equal or larger glass of juice. Drink 4-5 more glasses of clear fluid over the next hour. You will experience frequent bowel movements within an hour. Stay close to a washroom.
2. **Take first half or about 225ml of barium (easier to drink with a straw) within an hour of the Pico-Salax.**
3. Can have other clear fluids from the list above.

Snack:

- Ice pops or decaffeinated soft drink

Lunch

1. Broth or Bouillon or Boost or Ensure Clear.
2. Snack: Ice pops or decaffeinated soft drink.
3. **Take second half (about 225ml) of barium (easier to drink with a straw).**

Dinner about 5 to 6 PM

1. **Dissolve second package of Pico-Salax** in a glass of cold water stirring constantly for two to three minutes until all dissolved. If the solution heats while stirring, let it cool or add more cold water before drinking. Drink this glass followed by an equal or larger glass of juice. Drink 4 or 5 more glasses of clear fluid over the next hour. You will experience frequent bowel movements within an hour. Stay close to a washroom.
2. Can have other clear fluids as described.
3. You may take normal medications as directed. If you are on insulin, ask your physician about dose modifications.

At 8 PM

Drink 60 ml of Gastrografin mixed with 8 ounces of clear fluid.

No fluids after midnight except sips of fluid for any medications in the morning.

STEP 4: THE DAY OF THE TEST

In morning about 2 hours before test:

1. Sips of fluid for any normal medications as directed. If you are on insulin, ask your physician about dose modifications.
2. Try to empty bowel one last time just before the test to ensure little fluid is left before the test.

STEP 5: AFTER THE TEST

Resume normal diet and medications.

Please Note:

If you have to cancel your CT appointment, please contact the appropriate site:

QEII Health Sciences Centre (HI and VG sites) CT Bookings at 902-473-2162
Dartmouth General Hospital CT Bookings at 902-465-8598
Cobequid Community Health Centre CT bookings at 902-869-6102