PREPARING FOR A COLONOSCOPY

SANDRA’S STORY
Congratulations!

If you are talking to your doctor about scheduling a screening colonoscopy — a procedure you undergo as recommended around the age of 45 to confirm the health of your colon — you have taken an important step in keeping yourself healthy for you and your family.

Reason for Making This Important Decision

Colon cancer affects men and women of all racial and ethnic groups, and is most often found in people ages 45 and older. On average, about one in 23 people will get colon cancer in their lifetime. Early detection during a colonoscopy can help you prevent colon cancer from forming.*

A colonoscopy procedure is the only screening method that can actually prevent colon cancer at the time of the screening. This is because during a colonoscopy, the doctor can remove polyps — small growths that may develop into cancer if left alone — before they turn into cancer. The colonoscopy procedure takes about 30 minutes and is an outpatient procedure, meaning you will go home the same day as the procedure.

How to Get Ready for a Screening Colonoscopy

This graphic novella, featuring Sandra, was created to help you get ready for your colonoscopy. Sandra is one of the thousands of individuals who were screened in New York City last year. By reading Sandra’s story, you will learn the following:

- The reasons for getting a colonoscopy
- How to prepare for a colonoscopy, including information about bowel preparation (prep), a process involving taking medication by mouth, usually in liquid or tablet form
- What to expect before and after a colonoscopy

The last page of this graphic novella contains more information and tools to help you get ready, including a list of questions you can take with you to your next doctor’s visit.

THREE DAYS BEFORE THE COLONOSCOPY

AT THE STORE

Let’s see... what to pick up for my colonoscopy prep? The nurse said no red, purple or blue foods or liquids. Nothing that could look like blood in my intestine.

GROCERY LIST
- Apple juice
- Coconut water
- Ginger ale
- Sports drinks
- Tea
- Coffee
- Chicken broth
*Nothing with red, blue or purple coloring

If I can’t see through it, then I can’t have it. Apple juice should be okay.

...now to pick up the bowel prep solution...
Wow... That big jug is for the bowel prep solution?

Yes. It will clean out your colon — your large intestine. And this flavoring will help it taste better.

What will the procedure be like? Aaron had one before. Maybe he can tell me...
Hey Aaron. Didn’t you get a screening for colon cancer not too long ago?

Hello? Oh, hey Sandra. What’s up?

It was SO much to drink. And then I had to go to the bathroom for hours. I did the 50-meter dash 15 times...

Yeah. The colonoscopy wasn’t so bad. Don’t worry about the procedure. The bowel prep is the hard part.

Why is that?
You can get more information from your navigator. She gave you her card, right? Give her a call!

Wow... I didn’t know there was that much to the bowel prep.

I’ll do that now. Thanks, Aaron!

Katie Smith
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Hi, it’s Sandra. I have a colonoscopy coming up in a few days, and I would like some more information about my prep.
Sure, I can explain the process step by step. It's relatively simple – there are three main things to remember:

1. Have only a clear liquid diet the day before.
2. Finish drinking all the bowel prep.
3. Have someone take you home.

That face you make when someone says you can’t eat solid food all day.
Gotta sort out my liquid diet. Let’s see what we have...

All right... I can do this.

TWO DAYS BEFORE THE COLONOSCOPY
Hi, it's Sandra.

Yes. And a gentle reminder about medication…

I'm not taking any medication today, just like my doctor said.

Hi, Sandra!

Oh, hi Sandra! Do you have any questions?

Clear liquid diet only tomorrow, right?

Yes. And a gentle reminder about medication…
I’ll need your help tomorrow. It’s for the colon cancer screening.

Don’t worry, Sandra. We’ll always let you go first to the bathroom.

We won’t eat in front of you. And I’m going to be your escort!

You two are the best.

*Sigh*... I hope I don’t get cancer. The cancer screening will be hard, but I want to protect my health. Maybe a good night’s rest will help clear my mind...
Wait... they said no dairy. If I can't see through it, I can't have it.
LUNCHTIME, LATER THAT DAY...

ENJOY!

WE'RE HAVING THE SAME THING YOU ARE!

THANK YOU, BOTH. I COULDN'T DO THIS WITHOUT YOU.

ARE YOU ALL RIGHT? YOU DIDN'T HAVE SOLID FOOD ALL DAY.

I FEEL FINE. ALL THIS was ENOUGH.
And then some flavoring to make it taste better...

So, all I have to do is add water to the bowel prep solution...
You’re drinking all of that?

All except one-half. That’s for early tomorrow morning.
Uh-oh. “50-meter dash to the bathroom” time...

You’re setting a good example for the family, Sandra.

I remember you told me your grandfather had cancer.

Yes, he did. That’s what motivated me to do this. It’s better to find out early than too late.

Your son should get screened soon too. He did recently turn 51.
Dad had a colonoscopy?

Hmm...

How many times is that going to happen?

Ten times, maybe more. It was like this when your father had his colonoscopy.

Dad had a colonoscopy? Hmm...
DAY OF THE COLONOSCOPY

I should finish drinking the rest of the bowel prep.
Ready for your colonoscopy, hon?

Don’t worry; I’ll be there to pick you up! Then, you can tell me what it’s like.

You bet! Don’t forget - they won’t let me go home without an escort!
AT THE CHECK-IN DESK...

Welcome! Okay, so three things: First, you’re here for a colonoscopy?

Yes.

Second, did you eat or drink anything this morning?

Perfect. Third, do you have someone to take you home?

Yes, my husband.

Great. I’ll let you know when the doctor is ready to see you!
We’ll see the pictures of your colon here.

How was the bowel prep?

I drank it all and had only clear liquids yesterday. I feel clean and empty.

Great. Now, this sedative will make you sleepy, and you may not remember the colonoscopy later. Ready for your procedure?

I’m ready.
Relieved! I am a little hungry, though.

Hey! All done!

IN THE WAITING ROOM...

How do you feel?

Relieved! I am a little hungry, though.
Thanks for all your help! And I’m glad I did this. It feels great to invest in my health.

Hey Sandra! Looks like your procedure went well. I just wanted to remind you to wait to get your pictures. It should only be about an hour.

She seems okay. Maybe this is something I should do...

And don’t forget: no alcohol today. And don’t make any big plans tonight! Just rest.
AFTER THE COLONOSCOPY

Want to do something fun now? Go shopping?

Not today. No big plans, remember?

Oh, right... So, how was it?

Good. The nurse said they were able to take pictures of my whole colon. All the way to the end.

What did they see?

No polyps or bumps that could be cancer.
Boy, am I hungry...

Sandra, I'm making your favorite tonight!

Thank you! I can't wait!

This was all so completely worth the effort.
We are so proud of you, Sandra!

Maybe I should get checked for colon cancer?

Now... what about you?
QUESTIONS FOR YOUR DOCTOR

1. What kind of bowel preparation will I have to take before the colonoscopy procedure?

2. What other medication will I need to take besides the bowel preparation?

3. Will I have to stop taking any of my medication before the procedure?

4. How much time will I have to take off from work to prepare for the colonoscopy?

5. What kind of sedation will I receive during the colonoscopy?

6. How long does a colonoscopy take?

7. What if there is a polyp?

8. How often do I need to get a colonoscopy?

9. Who else in my family will need to get screened?

10. What should I do if I do not feel right after the procedure?
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