

Promoting Gastrointestinal Health

We are happy to announce a new series of articles that focus on improving and maintaining gastrointestinal health. Beginning this month, a new article will be posted each month focusing on a current topic in gastroenterology. These essays will be written by the physicians of New York Gastroenterology Associates. Several topics that are planned for the future include *The Role of Diet in Irritable Bowel Syndrome*, *Recent Advances in the Treatment of Inflammatory Bowel Disease*, *Harmful Effects of Medication on the Gut*, and *Gastroesophageal Reflux: Treatment beyond Acid Suppression*. We hope that you find these brief articles informative. We also encourage readers to send us your feedback and suggestions for future articles.

Colonoscopy and the Role of Bowel Preparation

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The success of colonoscopy in the prevention of colon and rectal cancer is highly dependent upon the endoscopist's ability to visualize and remove all colon polyps within the bowel. The better the bowel cleansing, the better the examination and the more confident your doctor can be that all abnormalities within the colon were detected.

An excellent bowel preparation means that all waste material in the bowel has been evacuated, resulting in a colon with little or no liquid or solid debris. In order to achieve this result, it is important to follow the preparation instructions provided by your doctor. Be sure to consume both doses of purgative even if you think that you are adequately prepared after the first

dose of laxative. If you become nauseated when consuming the purgative, stop drinking and wait about 30 minutes or so before resuming the preparation.

Many people question why a second dose of purgative must be taken 6 hours before the examination. This method of preparation, termed a “split-dose bowel preparation”, maximizes the likelihood of an excellent bowel preparation. A split-dose preparation is the most effective method for cleansing the right side of the colon, where polyps are often flat or subtle and easily missed if residual stool or fluid is present. Studies demonstrate that more polyps are found using a split-dose bowel preparation than when other regimens of bowel cleansing are used.

To summarize, remember that the quality of colonoscopy is only as good as the quality of bowel cleansing. Therefore, you should follow your doctor’s instructions for bowel cleansing carefully and completely. Both doses of purgative are needed, even if you think that you are cleansed out from the first dose. When your colon has been thoroughly cleansed, the rectal output should be consistently clear without any solid debris. If you believe that you have not been completely cleaned out in spite of taking both doses of laxative, call your doctor for further instructions. Finally, if you have a history of chronic constipation or an inadequate bowel cleansing during a prior colonoscopy, be sure to notify your physician when scheduling your colonoscopy.

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