Getting Ready for a CT Virtual Colonoscopy

QEII Health Sciences Centre
Dartmouth General Hospital
Cobequid Community Health Centre
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What is a CT virtual colonoscopy?
A virtual colonoscopy (VC), sometimes called CT colonography or CTC, is an exam used to check the inside lining of the colon (large bowel) for growths called polyps. A machine called a CT scanner takes a picture of the lining of your bowel using X-rays and shows it on a screen. This lets the doctor see your entire colon as well as certain areas in your belly and pelvis. To get ready for this exam, you must clean your colon. Follow the steps below to make sure that your bowel is empty and ready for the exam.

What can I expect?
- The exam takes about 15 minutes.
- You will not need any medicine for pain or to make you sleepy. We may give you a medicine through an intravenous (IV) to relax your bowel.
- You will wear a hospital gown for the exam. You will be taken to an exam room where you will lie on a CT exam table.
• A small tube (smaller than a pinky finger) that bends easily will be put a short way up your rectum. This will feel a bit like having a digital rectal exam.
• Air will be pumped slowly into your colon.
• The exam should not be painful. You may have some belly fullness, discomfort, or cramping during the exam. You may feel the urge to move your bowels (feel like you need to go to the bathroom). These feelings will go away as soon as the exam is over.
• CT pictures are taken of your belly and pelvis while you are lying on your back and then on your stomach. Each time you will be asked to hold your breath for about 10 seconds while the CT scanner takes pictures.

How do I get my colon ready for the exam?
Following the steps in the next section will keep you comfortable and give us a clean bowel at the same time. If you have any questions about these steps, call your family doctor, or the Department of Radiology CT booking line at 902-473-2162 between 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m., Monday to Friday.
STEP 1: At least 3 days before your exam

Pick up a kit from one of the locations below.
The kit contains:
- 450 ml Readi-Cat® barium
- 60 ml Gastrografin®

Where do I get my kit?

Radiology Department, X-ray Reception Desk:
› QEII (Halifax Infirmary site) - 3rd Floor
› QEII (Victoria General site) - 3rd Floor
› Dartmouth General Hospital
› Cobequid Community Health Centre - 2nd Floor

The Radiology Department is open Monday to Friday from 7:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

STEP 2: 2 days before your exam

At a drugstore, buy 1 box of PICO-SALAX®. You don’t need a prescription, but you may need to ask the pharmacist for it.

Eat a normal diet up to and including 2 days before your exam. After a normal evening meal 2 nights before your exam:

• Start a liquid diet. This includes water, juices without pulp (like white grape juice, cranberry, or cran-apple), decaffeinated coffee, decaffeinated soft drinks, ice pops, and weak tea without milk or cream. Broth, bouillon, and Boost® are OK to drink. (Boost® is not
a clear liquid, but it is OK to drink. Do not have any milk products. Drinking just water is not enough as you may feel weak or faint, so choose clear options like we have listed here.

- Take your usual medicines unless you are diabetic. If you have diabetes, talk to your doctor first. The dose of your diabetes medicine (insulin or pills) may need to be changed. If you have diabetes, you may also need to check your blood sugar level more often.

- Put the barium and Gastrografin® from your kit in the fridge.

**STEP 3: The day before your exam**

**Breakfast**

- Dissolve the first package of PICO-SALAX® in a glass of cold water. Stir constantly for 2-3 minutes until it is 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 4-5 more glasses of clear fluid over the next hour. You will have frequent bowel movements within an hour. Stay close to a washroom.

- Take the first half or about 225 ml (1 cup) of barium (it’s easier to drink with a straw) within 1 hour of the PICO-SALAX®.
• You can have other clear fluids from the list above.

**Snack**
• Ice pops or decaffeinated soft drink.

**Lunch**
• Broth, bouillon or Boost®.

**Snack**
• Ice pops or decaffeinated soft drink.
• Take the second half or about 225 ml (1 cup) of barium (easier to drink with a straw).

**Dinner (about 5-6 p.m.)**
• Dissolve the second package of PICO-SALAX® in a glass of cold water. Stir constantly for 2-3 minutes until it is all dissolved, just like you did for breakfast. 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 have frequent bowel movements within an hour. Stay close to a washroom.
• You can have other clear fluids from the list above.
• Take your usual medicines unless you are diabetic. If you have diabetes, talk to your doctor first. The dose of your diabetes
medicine (insulin or pills) may need to be changed. If you have diabetes, you may also need to check your blood sugar level more often.

At 8 p.m.

- Drink 60 ml (2 ounces) of Gastrografin® mixed with 235 ml (8 ounces, about 1 cup) of clear fluid. Do not drink any fluids after midnight except sips of fluid to take with your usual medicines in the morning.

STEP 4: The day of your exam

About 2 hours before your test:

- Take sips of fluid for any usual medicines as directed. If you are on insulin, ask your doctor about how much you should take.
- Try to empty your bowel one last time just before the exam to make sure no fluid is left inside.

STEP 5: After your exam

Go back to your usual diet and medicines.

If you have any questions, please ask.
We are here to help you.
Notes:

Looking for more health information?
This pamphlet and all our active patient pamphlets are searchable here:
Contact your local public library for books, videos, magazines, and other resources.
For more information go to http://library.novascotia.ca

Nova Scotia Health Authority promotes a smoke-free, vape-free, and scent-free environment.
Please do not use perfumed products. Thank you!

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The information in this pamphlet is to be updated every 3 years or as needed.