

Getting Ready for a Computed Tomography (CT) Virtual Colonoscopy

This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

Find all patient education resources here:
www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time:
Call 811 or visit: <https://811.novascotia.ca>

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QE II Health Sciences Centre
Dartmouth General Hospital
Cobequid Community Health Centre

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What will happen during the test?

- The test will take about 15 minutes.
- You will not need any medication for pain or to make you comfortable.
- You will be asked to change into a hospital gown.
- You will be taken to an exam room and asked to lie on an exam table.
- The CT technologist will put a small, flexible tube a short way up your rectum (bum). This will feel a bit like having a digital rectal exam (prostate exam).
- They will slowly pump air into your colon.
- The test should not hurt. During the test, you may have:
 - › Bloating
 - › Discomfort
 - › Cramping
 - › The urge to poop

These feelings will go away as soon as the test is over.

- Pictures of your belly and pelvis will be taken while you are lying on your back and then on your stomach. Pictures may also be taken while you are lying on your side.
- While the pictures are being taken, you will be asked to hold your breath for about 10 seconds.

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What is a CT virtual colonoscopy?

A virtual colonoscopy (VC) is a test that checks the inside lining of the colon (large bowel) for growths called **polyps**. It is also called a computed tomography (CT) colonography or a CTC.

A machine called a **CT scanner** takes X-ray pictures of the lining of your colon. It puts all of the pictures together to make one picture. This shows the doctor all of your colon and parts of your belly and pelvis.

How do I get ready for a CT VC?

- To get ready for this test, you must clean out your colon.
- You will need the items listed on the following pages.
- Please follow the instructions to make sure your bowel is cleaned out properly for the test.

3 or more days before the test:

- Pick up a preparation kit at the **Radiology Department X-ray reception desk** located at:
 - › QE II (Halifax Infirmary site), 3rd floor
 - › QE II (Victoria General site), 3rd floor
 - › Dartmouth General Hospital, main floor
 - › Cobequid Community Health Centre, 2nd floor

You can come anytime between:

- › 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., Monday to Friday
- The preparation kit includes:
 - › 450 ml Read-Cat® 2 barium sulfate
 - › 60 ml Gastrografin®

Note: Keep the kit at room temperature.

2 days before the test:

- Buy 1 box of Pico-Salax® from a pharmacy.

Note: You may have to ask the pharmacist for this, but you **do not** need a prescription.

- **Follow the instructions in the preparation kit very carefully.** This will help to prevent discomfort while cleaning your bowel.
- Stool (poop) left in your bowel can hide serious conditions. If your bowel is not fully clean, the test may need to be done again.
- **If you have any questions about the instructions, call your primary health care provider (family doctor or nurse practitioner) or the Diagnostic Imaging Department where your test is scheduled.**
- Most medications can be taken as usual.
- **If you have diabetes**, ask your primary health care provider how to take your medication(s) on the day of the test.
For example, your regular insulin dose (amount) on the morning of the test may be cut in half, or you may need to stop taking pills by mouth until after the test. Check your blood sugar levels regularly.