What is a clear liquid diet?
Clear liquids are fluids that can be seen through. If you can read words on a printed piece of paper through the liquid, it is clear. Some examples of clear liquid are water, apple juice, clear broth and gelatin (not red). Black coffee and soda are considered clear liquids. Milk, cream and juices with pulp, like orange juice, are not. Do not drink any artificially-dyed red liquids as they stain the fluid in the colon which can be mistaken for blood.

Can I continue to drink clear liquids after I have started taking the preparation?
Yes, it is OK to drink liquids during the preparation as long as they are clear. You may have clear liquids up until 4 hours before your procedure. Do not eat any solid food for the whole day of your preparation or on the day of your procedure. You will be able to eat normally after your procedure.

I was told to take magnesium citrate but was not given a prescription for it.
Magnesium citrate is available over the counter in the laxative aisle of your pharmacy. It is a clear, fizzy liquid that comes in a 10 oz bottle. Do not get the cherry flavor as it is colored red.

What time should I start my preparation?
If you are taking the Dulcolax (bisacodyl) and Miralax/Gatorade preparation, take your Dulcolax pills with 2 glasses of water between 12 noon and 3 PM. Start to drink the Miralax/Gatorade preparation 2 hours later. Drink one 8 oz glass every 15-20 minutes until the solution is gone. If you are taking GoLytely, NuLytely or a PEG solution, your directions for drinking the solution will be similar, but follow the directions given to you.

Do I need to drink all of the preparation?
Yes. It is important to drink all of the preparation as the wall of the colon must be completely rinsed to see polyps. If the colon is not rinsed, the doctor can’t see polyps clearly and your procedure may need to be rescheduled.

Is there anything I can do to make the preparation easier to take?
Most people find it is easier to drink the solution if it is cold. Do not put ice into the prep solution. This will thin the preparation and it won’t work. Some preparations come with flavor packets that make it taste better. Any non-red Crystal Light powdered drink mix can be used for flavor. Drinking the solution through a straw also helps.

Will the preparation irritate my hemorrhoids or skin?
Using moist wipes instead of toilet paper may help prevent irritation. Vaseline or Desitin may be applied to the anal area to protect the skin.

When will my bowels start to move?
This is different from person to person. Some people may move their bowels a half hour after starting the preparation. Most people will begin moving their bowels 2 – 3 hours after starting the prep. Some people don’t move their bowels until the solution is almost finished.

What if I’ve taken all of the preparation but haven’t started moving my bowels yet?
If you can, walking around helps the bowel to move. Drinking clear liquids, black coffee or tea may also help. The doctor on call at 617-983-7848 may have other suggestions.

When will I stop moving my bowels?
Most people stop moving their bowels about 2 – 3 hours after finishing the solution. People are different and some have liquid movements right up until the time of the procedure. The instrument used during the colonoscopy will suction out any liquid left in the bowel. You will not have an “accident” during the procedure.
I ate solid food on the day before my colonoscopy. Can I still have my procedure?
This depends on the results of your preparation. Left over solid stool may remain in your colon. If you are passing clear liquid with no solid material, your procedure may still be able to be done.

What if I’ve taken all my preparation and am still passing solid stool on the day of my exam?
In this case, your procedure will need to be rescheduled. You may be prescribed a different preparation for your next procedure.

I am nauseated and having difficulty finishing the drink. What should I do?
Take a 30-40 minute break from drinking the solution. This should help your stomach settle down. Sipping each cup more slowly or drinking 4 oz glasses instead of 8 oz may help. Walking around may help your stomach to empty and reduce nausea. Having the solution chilled and using a straw can also help.

I started vomiting after taking the prep. Can I still have my procedure?
It depends on how much of the prep you kept down and how well it worked. If you were able to keep down about 75% of the solution and your movements are clear, light yellow or tan liquid, the preparation is probably OK. If you are passing any solid stool and less than 50-75% stayed down, your procedure will probably need to be rescheduled.

I take medicine for my diabetes. Should I adjust my dose?
Your insulin will need to be adjusted since you will not be having a meal for the whole day before your procedure. You should check with the doctor who prescribes your insulin about adjusting the dose. If you take pills for your diabetes, these will probably need to be reduced also. You will need to check with the doctor who prescribes these for you.

I take Coumadin (warfarin). Will I need to stop it before my procedure?
You must check with the doctor who prescribes your Coumadin to make sure it is safe to stop it. Removing a polyp while on blood thinning medication can cause bleeding. If you stay on Coumadin, the decision to do the procedure will be up to the doctor doing your procedure.

I do not have a ride home. Can I still have my procedure?
In order for you to receive sedation, an adult relative or friend must drive you home. A taxi, Uber driver or The Ride cannot do this for you. If an adult is with you, it is OK to take a taxi or bus together, but this person must stay with you until you are safely home. If you are planning to have sedation and do not have a ride, your procedure must be rescheduled when someone can take you home. Ride services like Guardian Medical Companions, 617-964-7433 and Friendship Works, 617-482-1510 will send a person to drive you home. This will cost around $40.

I have a cold. Can I still have my procedure?
In most cases, yes. If you have lung disease, are short of breath, have a fever, or something more serious than a normal head cold, you should check with your primary care doctor (PCP).

I currently have my period. Is this a problem?
No, it is safe to have your procedure during your period. It will not interfere with the exam.

I am taking pain pills. Will the sedation medicines work for me?
The usual medicines given for procedures may not work well for people who take pain pills, medicines like Ativan (lorazepam), Klonopin (clonazepam), Valium (diazepam), or drink large amounts of alcohol. Stronger medicine given by the anesthesia doctors works better in these cases. This must be arranged when your procedure is scheduled. If your exam is already scheduled and you will need the stronger medicine, please call 617-983-7120. Tell the secretary that your procedure will need to be changed to a different day and you will need anesthesia.

My directions say to stop eating fiber-containing food for 3-5 days before I start my prep. What can I eat?
You can eat foods like mashed potato, yogurt, bananas, eggs, white bread, white pasta, lean meats, ground beef, pizza without seeds or vegetables, creamy peanut butter, and low fiber cereals like Cream of Wheat, Rice Krispies and Special K. The important thing to remember is not to eat high fiber foods like whole grains, seeds, nuts, vegetables and fruits.