



Colonoscopy 101: What to Know and How to Prepare

Colorectal cancer is one of the most common cancers in the U.S., affecting millions each year. While colonoscopy is the gold standard for screening, alternatives such as Cologuard or fecal immunochemical test (FIT) testing are also available for those who are eligible.¹ These simple screenings can detect precancerous polyps and early-stage cancers. Be sure to check your medical benefit plan coverage for what is available to you.

What to Expect Before, During, and After a Colonoscopy:²

Before: You will need to fast and take laxatives to prepare your colon. Be sure to discuss any medications you are taking with your doctor, as some may need to be discontinued temporarily for the procedure. Typically, the “prep” includes the following:

- A week before the procedure, avoid certain foods that may interfere with your doctor’s visibility of your colon, such as nuts and seeds.
- The day before the exam, drink clear liquids like broth, tea, gelatin, and electrolyte drinks, and avoid red colors, which can be mistaken for blood during the procedure.
- The evening before the procedure, and sometimes again the morning of the procedure, drink a bowel prep prescribed by your physician to empty your colon.
- Arrange for someone to drive you to and from the procedure, as you will be sedated and unable to operate a vehicle afterward.

During: You will be sedated for the procedure, and a thin, flexible tube with a camera attached to the end will be inserted into your rectum to examine your colon.

After: You may experience some bloating and gas, which should resolve within a few hours. A few days after the procedure, you will follow up with your doctor to review the results and discuss any necessary next steps.

It is important to follow the recommended screening intervals—typically every 10 years for a colonoscopy with normal findings, or as often as your doctor advises based on your health history and test results.³ Your provider may recommend more frequent colonoscopies if you had more than two polyps, a polyp greater than 0.4 inches (1 centimeter), or cancerous polyps. By being proactive and completing regular screenings, you can identify health concerns early and protect your health.

1. American Cancer Society. “Colorectal Cancer Screening Tests.” Revised July 31, 2024. Accessed October 26, 2024. <https://www.cancer.org/cancer/types/colon-rectal-cancer/detection-diagnosis-staging/screening-tests-used.html>

2. Cleveland Clinic. “Colonoscopy.” November 11, 2022. Accessed October 26, 2024. <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diagnostics/4949-colonoscopy>

3. Mayo Clinic. “Colonoscopy.” Accessed October 26, 2024. [https://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/colonoscopy/about/pac-20393569#:~:text=During%20a%20colonoscopy%2C%20the%20healthcare,intestine%20\(colon\)%20and%20rectum](https://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/colonoscopy/about/pac-20393569#:~:text=During%20a%20colonoscopy%2C%20the%20healthcare,intestine%20(colon)%20and%20rectum)



8 Ways to Improve Eye Health

In the U.S., about 12 million people over the age of 40 have vision impairment. This includes conditions such as digital eye strain, age-related macular degeneration, and dry eye, all of which are becoming increasingly prevalent.¹

Adults and children can enhance eye health by implementing the following strategies:^{2,3}

- 1. Reduce Screen Time:** Prolonged exposure to digital devices can lead to digital eye strain, which can lead to symptoms like dryness, blurred vision, and headaches. Take regular breaks from screens to lessen the strain on your eyes.
- 2. Adopt the 20-20-20 Rule:** When using digital devices, every 20 minutes look at something 20 feet away for at least 20 seconds. This simple practice helps to rest your eyes and reduce the discomfort associated with prolonged screen use.
- 3. Get Regular Eye Exams:** Schedule comprehensive eye exams at least once every two years, or more frequently if you have existing eye conditions or a family history of eye diseases. Dilated eye exams can help detect vision loss early.²
- 4. Optimize Lighting:** Ensure that your workspace is well-lit to minimize glare and reduce eye strain. Opt for softer, indirect lighting when possible. When outdoors, wear sunglasses that block 99 to 100 percent of UVA and UVB radiation.
- 5. Adjust Screen Settings:** Increase the contrast and adjust the brightness of your monitor to a comfortable level. This adjustment can lessen eye fatigue and make reading text on screens more comfortable.
- 6. Quit Smoking:** Smoking increases your risk of diseases like macular degeneration and cataracts. If you smoke, you can call 800-QUIT-NOW (800-784-8669) to get help with quitting.
- 7. Maintain a Healthy Diet:** Incorporate foods rich in vitamins and antioxidants, such as leafy greens, fish, and nuts, into your diet. Nutrients like lutein in tomatoes, zeaxanthin in kale, and omega-3 fatty acids found in fatty fish, support eye health and can help prevent age-related vision problems.

When detected early, vision loss can often be prevented or delayed.¹ Taking proactive steps today to care for your eyes can significantly reduce your risk of developing irreversible eye damage.

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Fast Facts: Vision Loss." May 15, 2024. Accessed October 26, 2024. <https://www.cdc.gov/vision-health/data-research/vision-loss-facts/index.html#:~:text=Vision%20loss%20and%20age,more%20than%20double%20by%202050>.

2. National Eye Institute. "8 Things You Can Do Right Now to Protect Your Vision." November 1, 2022. Accessed October 26, 2024. <https://www.nei.nih.gov/learn-about-eye-health/healthy-vision/8-things-you-can-do-right-now-protect-your-vision>

3. Mayo Clinic. "Eye Health: Tips for Keeping Your Eyes Healthy." Accessed October 26, 2024. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/expert-answers/eye-health/faq-20057988>



Heart Health Essentials

Heart disease includes several heart-related health conditions, including atherosclerosis, heart attack, angina, stroke, coronary artery disease, heart failure, and arrhythmia.¹ Heart disease results from the buildup of plaques on the walls of arteries, making it harder for blood to flow through them. Heart health involves maintaining a healthy heart muscle, arteries, and veins to efficiently circulate blood throughout your body.

Here are some simple ways to protect your heart:^{2,3}

- **Choose Healthy Fats:** Focus on unsaturated fats like avocados, nuts, seeds, and olive oil, which can help reduce LDL (bad cholesterol) levels. In contrast, limit saturated fats, which are found in red meat, full-fat dairy products, and processed foods.
- **Engage in Regular Physical Activity:** Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate aerobic exercise each week. Activities like brisk walking, cycling, or swimming strengthen the heart muscle and improve circulation. Most exercises can be modified to fit unique limitations.
- **Manage Stress Effectively:** Incorporate relaxation techniques such as mindfulness, meditation, or deep breathing exercises into your daily routine. Chronic stress can negatively affect heart health by contributing to high blood pressure and unhealthy coping mechanisms.
- **Avoid Smoking and Limit Alcohol Consumption:** Smoking is a major risk factor for heart disease, while excessive alcohol intake can lead to high blood pressure and other cardiovascular issues. Quitting smoking is critical for heart health. If you do drink alcohol, do so in moderation, and if you don't drink, there is no need to start.
- **Select Lean Proteins:** Include sources of lean protein such as fish, skinless poultry, beans, and legumes. Fatty fish, like salmon and mackerel, are particularly beneficial due to their high omega-3 fatty acid content, which supports heart health.
- **Limit Added Sugars and Sodium:** Reduce your intake of foods high in added sugars and sodium. Processed snacks, sugary beverages, and fast foods are often culprits that can increase blood pressure and contribute to unwanted weight gain.

As you explore ways to adopt a heart-healthy lifestyle, examine your daily routines and focus on choosing healthier alternatives.



1. American Heart Association. "What is Cardiovascular Disease?." January 10, 2024. Accessed October 26, 2024. <https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/consumer-healthcare/what-is-cardiovascular-disease>

2. Cleveland Clinic. "Heart Disease." November 6, 2023. Accessed October 26, 2024. <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/24129-heart-disease>

3. Mayo Clinic. "Heart-healthy diet: 8 steps to prevent heart disease." April 04, 2024. Accessed October 26, 2024. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/heart-disease/in-depth/heart-healthy-diet/art-20047702>

IMMUNITY-BOOSTING CITRUS SALAD

Ingredients

- Mixed citrus fruits (orange, grapefruit, lime)
- Mixed greens
- 1/4 cup almonds, chopped
- Honey-Lemon dressing (made with lemon juice, honey, and olive oil)

Instructions

1. Peel and slice the citrus fruits and arrange them on a bed of mixed greens.
2. Sprinkle chopped almonds on top for crunch and added nutrition.
3. Drizzle with the honey-lemon dressing for a refreshing and immune-boosting salad.



Nutrition Facts (per serving)

Calories: 250
Protein: 5g
Carbohydrates: 30g
Fat: 12g
Fiber: 8g