

# PREPARING FOR A COLONOSCOPY

SANDRA'S STORY





## Congratulations!

If you are talking to your health care provider about scheduling a screening colonoscopy — a procedure you undergo to confirm the health of your colon — you have taken an important step to keep yourself healthy for you and your family. Many people should start screening at age 45. People at high risk of colon cancer may need to start earlier.

## Reason for Making This Important Decision

Colon cancer affects men and women of all racial and ethnic groups. On average, about one in 24 people will get colon cancer in their lifetime.\* Early detection during a colonoscopy can help prevent colon cancer from forming.

A colonoscopy procedure is the only screening method that can actually prevent colon cancer at the time of the screening. This is because during a colonoscopy, the health care provider can remove polyps — small growths that may develop into cancer if left alone — before they turn into cancer. The colonoscopy procedure takes about 30 minutes and is an outpatient procedure, meaning you will go home the same day.

## How To Get Ready for a Screening Colonoscopy

This graphic novella, featuring Sandra, was created to help you get ready for your colonoscopy. Sandra is one of the thousands of individuals who were screened in New York City last year. By reading Sandra's story, you will learn the following:

- The reasons for getting a colonoscopy
- How to prepare for a colonoscopy, including information about bowel preparation (prep), a process involving taking medication by mouth, usually in liquid or tablet form
- What to expect before and after a colonoscopy

The last page of this graphic novella contains more information and tools to help you get ready, including a list of questions you can take with you the next time you visit your health care provider.

To learn more, visit [nyc.gov/health/coloncancer](https://nyc.gov/health/coloncancer). For related stories about screening, click on **Mark's Decision** and **How To Do an At-Home Colon Cancer Test**.

\* Based on 2017-2019 data from the National Cancer Institute's Surveillance, Epidemiology, and End Results (SEER) Program. To learn more, visit [seer.cancer.gov/statfacts/html/colorect.html](https://seer.cancer.gov/statfacts/html/colorect.html).



# THREE DAYS BEFORE THE COLONOSCOPY

AT THE STORE

## GROCERY LIST

- Apple juice
- Coconut water
- Ginger ale
- Sports drinks
- Tea
- Coffee
- Chicken broth

\*Nothing with red, blue or purple coloring

LET'S SEE... WHAT TO PICK UP FOR MY COLONOSCOPY PREP? THE NURSE SAID NO RED, PURPLE OR BLUE FOODS OR LIQUIDS. NOTHING THAT COULD LOOK LIKE BLOOD IN MY INTESTINE.

IF I CANNOT SEE THROUGH IT, THEN I CANNOT HAVE IT. APPLE JUICE SHOULD BE OKAY.

... NOW TO PICK UP THE BOWEL PREP SOLUTION...

WOW... THAT  
BIG JUG  
IS FOR THE  
BOWEL PREP  
SOLUTION?

YES. IT WILL  
CLEAN OUT YOUR  
COLON - YOUR  
LARGE INTESTINE.

AND THIS  
FLAVORING  
WILL HELP IT  
TASTE BETTER.

WHAT WILL THE  
PROCEDURE BE  
LIKE? AARON HAD  
ONE BEFORE. MAYBE  
HE CAN TELL ME...

All Contacts 11:37 AM

Aaron

Abbott

Alex

All

Art

HELLO? OH,  
HEY SANDRA.  
WHAT'S UP?

HEY AARON. DIDN'T  
YOU GET SCREENED  
FOR COLON CANCER  
NOT TOO LONG  
AGO?

YEAH. THE  
COLONOSCOPY WAS  
NOT SO BAD. DO NOT  
WORRY ABOUT THE  
PROCEDURE. THE BOWEL  
PREP IS THE HARD  
PART.

WHY IS THAT?

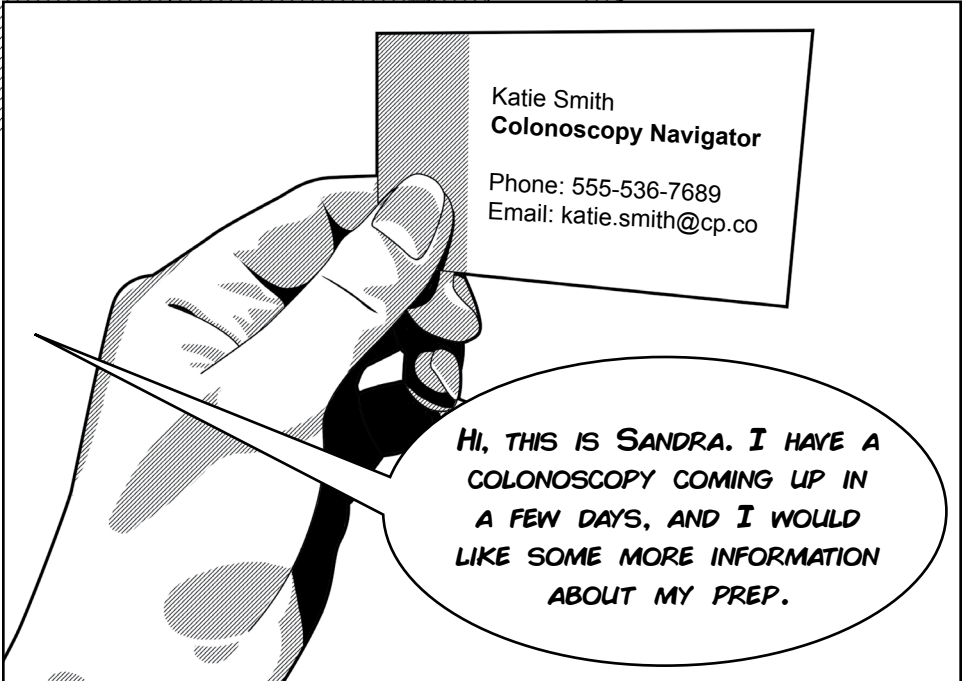
IT WAS SO MUCH TO  
DRINK. AND THEN I  
HAD TO GO TO THE  
BATHROOM FOR HOURS.  
I DID THE 50-METER  
DASH 15 TIMES...



**Wow... I DID NOT KNOW THERE WAS THAT MUCH TO THE BOWEL PREP.**

**YOU CAN GET MORE INFORMATION FROM YOUR NAVIGATOR. THEY GAVE YOU THEIR CARD, RIGHT? GIVE THEM A CALL!**

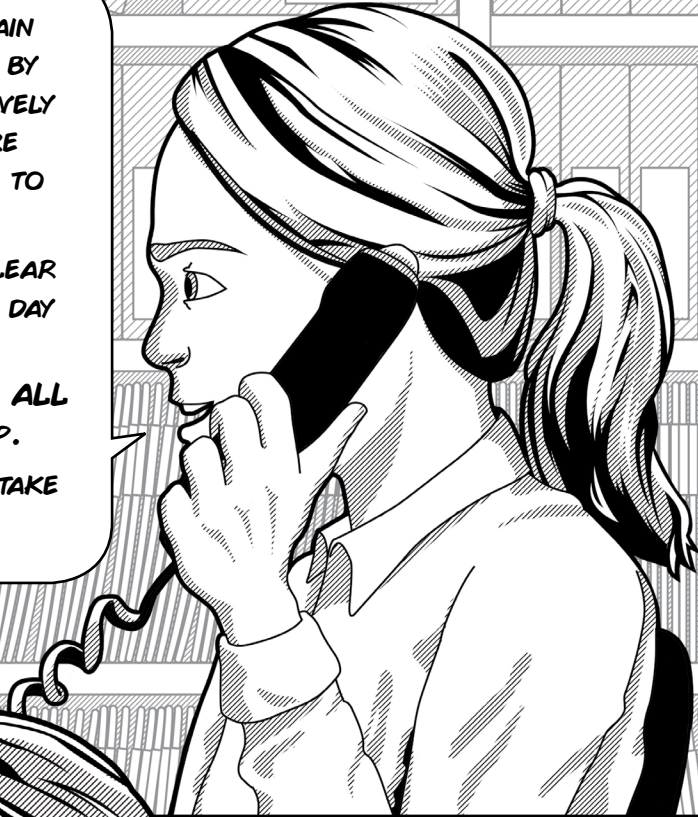
**I WILL DO THAT NOW. THANKS, AARON!**



**Katie Smith  
Colonoscopy Navigator  
Phone: 555-536-7689  
Email: katie.smith@cp.co**


**Hi, this is Sandra. I have a colonoscopy coming up in a few days, and I would like some more information about my prep.**



A black and white illustration of a woman with her hair in a ponytail, wearing a light-colored blouse. She is shown in profile, holding a telephone receiver to her ear. The background consists of vertical lines, suggesting a window or a wall.

**SURE, I CAN EXPLAIN THE PROCESS STEP BY STEP. IT IS RELATIVELY SIMPLE - THERE ARE THREE MAIN THINGS TO REMEMBER:**

- 1. HAVE ONLY A CLEAR LIQUID DIET THE DAY BEFORE.**
- 2. FINISH DRINKING ALL THE BOWEL PREP.**
- 3. HAVE SOMEONE TAKE YOU HOME.**

A black and white illustration of a man with short hair, wearing a collared shirt and a tie. He is shown from the chest up, holding a telephone receiver to his ear. His expression is one of surprise or concern, with wide eyes and an open mouth.

**THAT FACE YOU MAKE WHEN SOMEONE SAYS YOU CANNOT EAT SOLID FOOD ALL DAY.**

**TWO DAYS BEFORE THE COLONOSCOPY**

I HAVE TO SORT  
OUT MY LIQUID  
DIET. LET'S SEE  
WHAT WE HAVE...

ALL RIGHT...  
I CAN DO THIS.



HI, THIS IS SANDRA.

OH, HI SANDRA!  
DO YOU HAVE ANY  
QUESTIONS?

CLEAR LIQUID  
DIET ONLY  
TOMORROW, RIGHT?

YES. AND A GENTLE  
REMINDER ABOUT  
MEDICATION...

YES, MY PROVIDER  
EXPLAINED WHAT MEDICATION  
IS OK TO TAKE AND WHAT  
IS NOT.



I WILL NEED  
YOUR HELP  
TOMORROW.  
IT IS FOR THE  
COLON CANCER  
SCREENING.

DO NOT WORRY,  
SANDRA. WE  
WILL ALWAYS  
LET YOU GO  
FIRST TO THE  
BATHROOM.

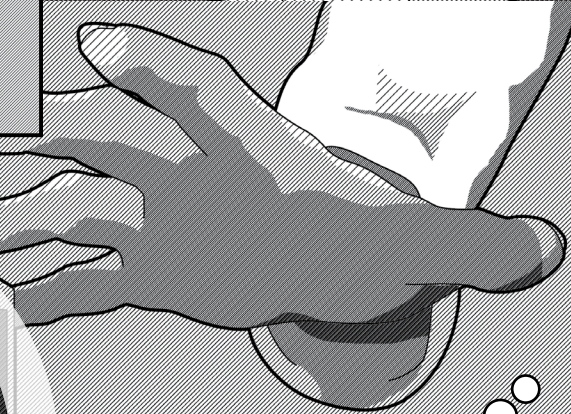
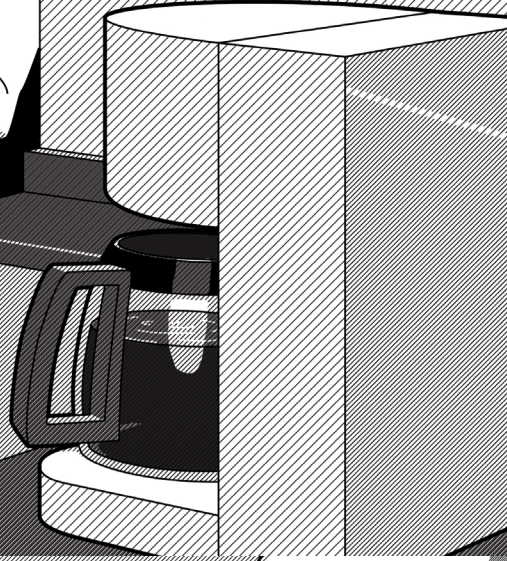
WE WILL NOT  
EAT IN FRONT  
OF YOU, AND I  
AM GOING TO BE  
YOUR ESCORT!

YOU TWO ARE  
THE BEST.

*\*SIGH\*... I HOPE I DO NOT HAVE  
CANCER. THE CANCER SCREENING WILL  
BE HARD, BUT I WANT TO PROTECT MY  
HEALTH. MAYBE A GOOD NIGHT'S REST  
WILL HELP CLEAR MY MIND...*

**ONE DAY BEFORE THE COLONOSCOPY**

**EARLY NEXT MORNING**



**WAIT... THEY SAID  
NO DAIRY. IF  
I CANNOT SEE  
THROUGH IT, I  
CANNOT HAVE IT.**

LUNCHTIME, LATER THAT DAY...


ENJOY!

WE ARE HAVING  
THE SAME THING  
YOU ARE!

THANK YOU, BOTH.  
I COULD NOT DO  
THIS WITHOUT YOU.

ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?  
YOU DID NOT HAVE  
SOLID FOOD ALL DAY.

I FEEL FINE. ALL  
THIS WAS ENOUGH.

A black and white comic panel showing a woman with short hair, wearing a white tank top, holding a pitcher of liquid. She has a slight smile and is looking down at the pitcher. A thought bubble is positioned above her head.

SO, ALL I HAVE TO  
DO IS ADD WATER  
TO THE BOWEL  
PREP SOLUTION...

A black and white comic panel showing a person's hands pouring liquid from a pitcher into a large plastic jug. The jug has a large empty rectangular label. In the bottom right corner, there is an inset showing a hand holding a small jar of powder, with some powder being poured into the jug.

AND THEN SOME  
FLAVORING TO MAKE  
IT TASTE BETTER...




YOU ARE DRINKING ALL OF THAT?



ALL EXCEPT ONE-HALF. THAT IS FOR EARLY TOMORROW MORNING.






YOU ARE SETTING A  
GOOD EXAMPLE FOR  
THE FAMILY, SANDRA.

I REMEMBER  
YOU TOLD ME  
YOUR GRANDFATHER  
HAD CANCER.


YES, HE DID. THAT IS WHAT  
MOTIVATED ME TO DO THIS. IT  
IS BETTER TO FIND OUT EARLY  
THAN TOO LATE.

YOUR SON SHOULD  
GET SCREENED  
SOON TOO. HE  
DID RECENTLY  
TURN 45.


UH-OH. "50-METER  
DASH TO THE  
BATHROOM" TIME...



HOW MANY TIMES  
IS THAT GOING  
TO HAPPEN?

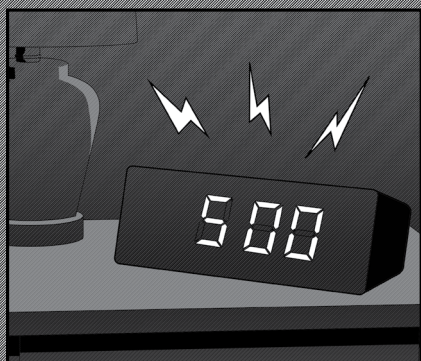


TEN TIMES, MAYBE  
MORE. IT WAS LIKE  
THIS WHEN YOUR FATHER  
HAD HIS COLONOSCOPY.




DAD HAD A  
COLONOSCOPY?  
HMM...

# DAY OF THE COLONOSCOPY

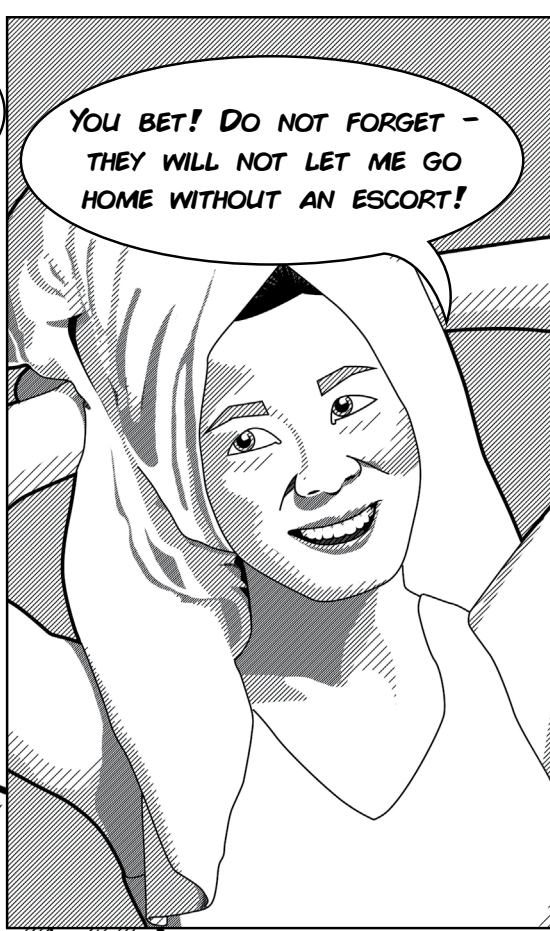


I SHOULD FINISH  
DRINKING THE REST  
OF THE BOWEL PREP.




A black and white illustration of a man with a beard and mustache, wearing a suit and tie. He is smiling and adjusting his tie with both hands. A speech bubble is positioned above him.

**READY FOR YOUR  
COLONOSCOPY,  
HONEY?**

A black and white illustration of a woman wearing a hijab, smiling broadly. She is looking towards the left. A speech bubble is positioned above her.

**YOU BET! DO NOT FORGET -  
THEY WILL NOT LET ME GO  
HOME WITHOUT AN ESCORT!**

A black and white illustration of a hand pointing towards a speech bubble. The hand is part of the man's arm from the first panel.

**DO NOT WORRY. I WILL  
BE THERE TO PICK YOU  
UP! THEN YOU CAN TELL  
ME WHAT IT IS LIKE.**

AT THE CHECK-IN DESK...

WELCOME! OK, SO THREE THINGS: FIRST, YOU ARE HERE FOR A COLONOSCOPY?

YES.

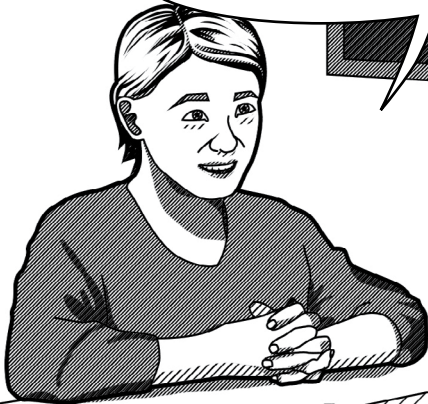
SECOND, DID YOU EAT OR DRINK ANYTHING THIS MORNING?


THE LAST BOWEL PREP AT 5 A.M., THEN NOTHING AT ALL.

PERFECT. THIRD, DO YOU HAVE SOMEONE TO TAKE YOU HOME?

YES. MY HUSBAND.

GREAT. I WILL LET YOU KNOW WHEN THE DOCTOR IS READY TO SEE YOU!





WE WILL SEE THE  
PICTURES OF YOUR  
COLON HERE.

HOW WAS THE  
BOWEL PREP?

I DRANK IT ALL AND HAD ONLY  
CLEAR LIQUIDS YESTERDAY. I  
FEEL CLEAN AND EMPTY.

GREAT. NOW, THIS SEDATIVE WILL  
MAKE YOU SLEEPY, AND YOU MAY NOT  
REMEMBER THE COLONOSCOPY LATER.  
READY FOR YOUR PROCEDURE?

I AM  
READY.

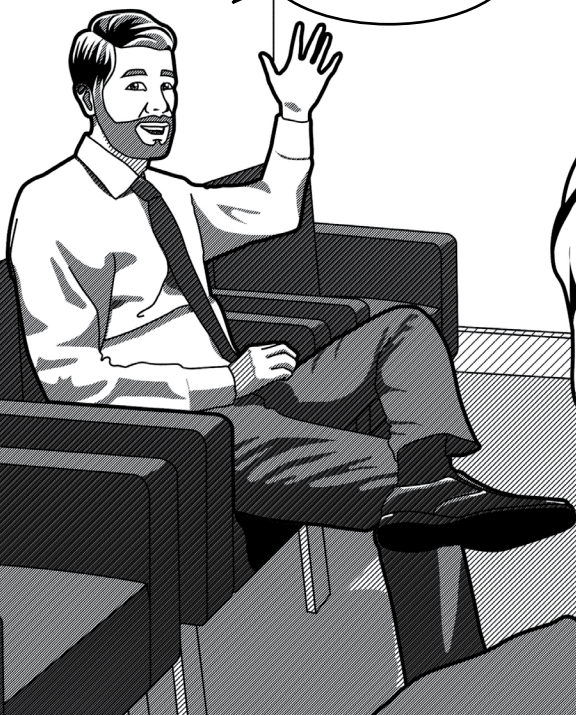
IN THE WAITING ROOM...


HEY! ALL DONE!



HOW DO YOU FEEL?


RELIEVED! I AM A LITTLE HUNGRY, THOUGH.





HEY SANDRA! LOOKS LIKE YOUR PROCEDURE WENT WELL. I JUST WANTED TO REMIND YOU TO WAIT TO GET YOUR PICTURES. IT SHOULD ONLY BE ABOUT AN HOUR.

AND DO NOT FORGET: NO ALCOHOL TODAY. AND DO NOT MAKE ANY BIG PLANS TONIGHT! JUST REST.



THANKS FOR ALL YOUR HELP! AND I AM GLAD I DID THIS. IT FEELS GREAT TO INVEST IN MY HEALTH.

SHE SEEMS OK. MAYBE THIS IS SOMETHING I SHOULD DO...



**AFTER THE COLONOSCOPY**

WANT TO DO  
SOMETHING FUN NOW?  
GO SHOPPING?


NOT TODAY.  
NO BIG PLANS,  
REMEMBER?

OH, RIGHT... SO,  
HOW WAS IT?

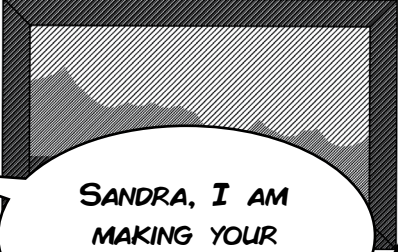
GOOD. THE NURSE  
SAID THEY WERE ABLE  
TO TAKE PICTURES OF  
MY WHOLE COLON.  
ALL THE WAY TO  
THE END.

WHAT DID  
THEY SEE?


NO POLYPS  
OR BUMPS  
THAT COULD  
BE CANCER.




BOY, AM I  
HUNGRY...



SANDRA, I AM  
MAKING YOUR  
FAVORITE TONIGHT!



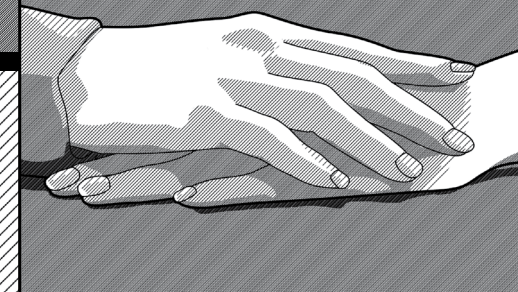
THANK YOU! I  
CANNOT WAIT!



THIS WAS ALL SO  
COMPLETELY WORTH  
THE EFFORT.

WE ARE SO PROUD  
OF YOU, SANDRA!

MAYBE I SHOULD  
GET CHECKED FOR  
COLON CANCER?



NOW... WHAT  
ABOUT YOU?



## Questions for Your Health Care Provider

1. What kind of bowel preparation will I have to take before the colonoscopy?
2. What other medication will I need to take besides the bowel preparation?
3. Will I have to stop taking any of my medication before the procedure?
4. How much time will I have to take off from work to prepare for the colonoscopy?
5. What kind of sedation will I receive during the colonoscopy?
6. How long does a colonoscopy take?
7. What if there is a polyp?
8. How often do I need to get a colonoscopy?
9. Who else in my family will need to get screened?
10. What should I do if I do not feel right after the colonoscopy?



## **Acknowledgments**

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