This handout explains how a virtual colonoscopy CT works, how to prepare, how it is done, what to expect, and how to get your results.

What is a virtual colonoscopy?
A virtual colonoscopy is a computed tomography (CT) scan of the colon. It uses a special X-ray machine to take detailed pictures.
CT can show many types of tissue in the same image. Your doctor will be able to see pictures of your liver, spleen, pancreas, kidneys, lower gastrointestinal (digestive) tract, colon, and rectum.

How does the scan work?
During a virtual colonoscopy, many X-ray beams are passed through the abdomen at many angles. The X-ray tube revolves around you, and takes pictures from many angles, forming cross-section images (slices) of the area. Your doctor will view the pictures on a computer.

How do I prepare?
You will receive bottles of Tagitol, a type of contrast, from the clinic. Starting 2 days before your scan, follow these instructions about what to eat and drink, and when to drink the Tagitol.

2 Days Before Your Scan
• Drink plenty of water or clear liquids during the day.
  At breakfast, you will drink 1 bottle of Tagitol. You may also have:
    – White bread, low-fiber cereals, butter
    – Clear juices (no pulp or seeds), coffee, tea, milk, yogurt
• At lunch, you will drink 1 bottle of Tagitol. You may also have:
- Tender, ground, and well-cooked meat, fish, or poultry
- Small servings of canned or well-cooked vegetables that do NOT include skins, seeds, or pulp
- Broth and strained soups

- At dinner, you will drink 1 bottle of Tagitol. You may also have:
  - Tender, ground, and well-cooked meat, fish, or poultry
  - Small servings of canned or well-cooked vegetables with NO skins, seeds, or pulp
  - Broth and strained soups

**1 Day Before Your Scan**

On the day before your scan, drink plenty of water or clear liquids. You may eat or drink ONLY items listed below. **If an amount is given, be sure to drink the entire amount.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Breakfast</td>
<td>Clear soup (any broth)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strained fruit juices without pulp</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Flavored gelatin that is not red (do <strong>not</strong> add other ingredients)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Soft drinks, black coffee, or plain tea</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lunch (about 12 noon)</td>
<td>Clear soup (any broth)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strained fruit juices without pulp</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Flavored gelatin that is not red (do <strong>not</strong> add other ingredients)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Soft drinks, black coffee, or plain tea</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 p.m.</td>
<td>Drink 1 full 8-ounce glass of water.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 p.m.</td>
<td>Drink 1 full 8-ounce glass of water.</td>
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<td>3 p.m.</td>
<td>Drink 1 full 8-ounce glass of water.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 p.m.</td>
<td>Drink 1 full 8-ounce glass of water.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dinner (about 5 p.m.)</td>
<td>Clear soup (any broth)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strained fruit juices without pulp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Flavored gelatin that is not red (do <strong>not</strong> add other ingredients)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</table>
5:30 p.m. | Open your LO So Prep kit. **Slowly add about ½ of the contents of magnesium carbonate, citric acid, and potassium citrate to 8 ounces of cold water.** Use a large glass that holds at least 16 ounces. Stir gently. After the fizzing stops, slowly add the rest of the packet to the glass. Drink the entire mixture in the glass. *(You should have a bowel movement 30 minutes to 6 hours after drinking this mixture.)*

6 p.m. | Drink 1 full 8-ounce glass of water.

7 p.m. | Drink 1 full 8-ounce glass of water.

7:30 p.m. | Open your LO So Prep kit. **Take the 4 Bisacodyl tablets with 8 ounces of water.** *(You should have bowel movements in 6 to 12 hours.)*

8 p.m. | Drink 1 full 8-ounce glass of water.

9 p.m. | Do **not** eat after 9 p.m. Keep drinking clear liquids so that your body stays hydrated.

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**On the Day of Your Scan**

- **Do NOT** eat anything before your scan.
- Drink plenty of water or clear liquids.
- Wear comfortable, loose-fitting clothing.
- Do **not** wear clothing with zippers or snaps. Metal objects can affect the scanned image.
- **Women:** Tell your doctor or CT technologist if there is any chance that you are pregnant.

**How is the scan done?**

- The CT technologist will help you get into position on the CT table. Pillows will be used to help you stay in the right position during the scan.
- The technologist will then leave the room. You will be alone in the room during the scan, but the technologist can see, hear, and speak with you through an intercom at all times.
- You will lie still while the table moves into the center of the scanner. You will also need to hold still when the scans are being done. Holding still during the scan results in the best CT pictures.
- For the first few scans, the table will move quickly through the scanner. These first scans check the correct starting position. For the rest of the scans, the table moves more slowly through the scanner.
• A CT scan of the colon uses carbon dioxide gas to expand your bowel. This allows us to get a clearer scan of the colon. The gas will be placed in your colon through a small tube inserted into your rectum.

• A virtual colonoscopy usually takes 30 to 45 minutes. When the scan is over, we may ask you to wait while we check the images for quality. A few more scans may be done, if needed.

• After the scan, you can go back to your normal activities and diet. Your body will quickly absorb the carbon dioxide. You will have little discomfort after the scan.

What will I feel during the scan?

• CT scanning does not cause any pain. You may feel some discomfort from needing to hold still during the scans.

• The carbon dioxide may cause a little discomfort for a short time.

• Because CT uses X-rays, you may not have a family member or friend in the CT room during the scan.

• For young patients, a parent may be able to stay in the room with their child to help reduce fear and provide comfort. The parent will need to wear a lead apron to limit exposure to the radiation used in the scan.

Who interprets the results and how do I get them?

A radiologist skilled in CT scanning will review and interpret the CT images. The radiologist will not talk with you about the results. The radiologist will send a detailed report to your primary care provider or referring doctor. Your doctor will give you the results.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

- UWMC Imaging Services: 206.598.6200
- UW Roosevelt Radiology: 206.598.6868
- Harborview Imaging Services: 206.744.3105