



Gloucestershire Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Endoscopy: Self-administration of a phosphate enema

Introduction

This leaflet explains how to administer your medication (enema) which is important for your procedure.

What is a phosphate enema?

An enema is fluid that is placed in the rectum through the anus (back passage) to clear the bowel. The phosphate enema that you have been given is a disposable single dose that will clean the section of your bowel that will be examined during the procedure.

Warning – Do not drink the liquid substance in the phosphate enema tube.

Why do I need to have a phosphate enema?

It is important to have a clear view of the lower part of your colon. This is needed to help with the diagnosis of your bowel symptoms.

What are the alternatives?

Oral (by mouth) bowel preparation is an alternative, but these are usually used for investigations such as colonoscopy or barium enema in which an investigation is requested to look further into the colon.

Are there any side effects?

Rare side effects are:

- Rectal bleeding
- Blistering
- Burning
- Itching

If you are breastfeeding it is advised that breast milk is expressed and discarded for at least 24 hours after having the enema as the main ingredients contained in the enema may pass into the breast milk.

When to use the enema

Use the enema about 60 minutes before leaving home for the examination. This will allow more than enough time for the enema to work, and travel will not be a problem. Give yourself plenty of time to relax. You should still use the enema even if you have recently passed a bowel motion.

If you feel you may have difficulty using the enema, please contact the Endoscopy Unit before your appointment so we can support you.

If you have a colostomy or ileostomy, you should contact the Endoscopy Department for advice. The contact information is at the end of this leaflet.

How to use the phosphate enema

The enema can be used at room temperature or you may wish to warm it slightly by placing the bottle in (tepid) water; this should be at body temperature.



- After washing your hands, lie on your left side with your knees pulled upwards towards your chest; draw your right leg up more than the left.
- Remove the orange protective cap from the tube. Insert the tube gently into your anus (back passage) so that about three quarters of the tip is inside with the tip pointing towards your navel. Slowly squeeze the contents of the bottle into your back passage. You should stop if you feel resistance to the fluid and try angling the tube differently. If resistance remains then stop. Forcing the fluid may cause an injury. Gently remove the tube from the back passage. It is quite normal to experience some leakage of the enema liquid from the rectum. It is also normal for some residue to remain in the bottle.



- Remain lying on your left side for 1 to 5 minutes until you feel a strong urge to open your bowels. Be prepared to expect frequent loose bowel movements

within 5 minutes of having the enema. This is normal and shows that the medicine is working. Remain near a toilet until the effects have worn off.

- You may feel a little unsteady after the enema, so make sure that you do not get up too quickly to go to the toilet. Very rarely, some people feel faint when they try to get up. If this happens, lie back down until the feeling passes.
- Discard the used bottle in a plastic bag, place in the bin then wash your hands.

Drink only clear fluids, such as water (without colouring or flavouring), after you have administered the enema as this will help to satisfy your thirst until the procedure has been done.

Contact information

Medication Advice Line (answer machine)

If you have any questions relating to your medication, please leave a message and a member of staff will return your call:

Cheltenham General Hospital

Tel: 0300 422 3370

Gloucestershire Royal Hospital

Tel: 0300 422 8232

Other Endoscopy Units

Cirencester Hospital

Tel: 0300 421 6294

Monday to Friday, 8:00am to 4:00pm

Stroud General Hospital

Tel: 0300 421 8073

Monday to Friday, 8:00am to 6:00pm

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Shared Decision Making

If you are asked to make a choice, you may have lots of questions that you want to ask. You may also want to talk over your options with your family or friends. It can help to write a list of the questions you want answered and take it to your appointment.

Ask 3 Questions

To begin with, try to make sure you get the answers to three key questions if you asked to make a choice about your healthcare.

1. What are my options?
2. What are the pros and cons of each option for me?
3. How do I get support to help me make a decision that is right for me?



These resources have been adapted with kind permission from the MAGIC Programme, supported by the Health Foundation.

***Ask 3 Questions** is based on Shepherd HL, et al. Three questions that patients can ask to improve the quality of information physicians give about treatment options: A cross-over trial.

Patient Education and Counselling, 2011;84: 379-85



<https://aqua.nhs.uk/resources/shared-decision-making-case-studies/>



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