

Rectal irrigation and the B/Braun irrigomatic pump

Advice form the Pelvic Floor Unit

This leaflet aims to answer any questions you may have about rectal irrigation and how the B/Braun irrigomatic pump works. It gives you information on why this may be a suitable treatment for you, as well as information on the risks and benefits. If you would like to understand rectal irrigation in greater detail, please feel free to speak to your specialist nurse/physiotherapist.

What is rectal irrigation

Rectal irrigation is a method of 'cleaning out' the lower part of the bowel using water and irrigation equipment. This will allow you to have confidence that your rectum is empty, enabling you to get on with your everyday life without having to worry about leakage from your back passage. Rectal irrigation can be used by a variety of people, and for a variety of bowel disorders, including constipation, evacuation difficulties, slow transit constipation and faecal incontinence. The procedure is often used on patients who have suffered a stroke or spinal cord injuries, and patients with neurological disorders such as Parkinson's disease, spina bifida or multiple sclerosis. This allows them to manage their own bowel care independently at home.

How does the B/Braun irrigomatic pump work?

In order to set up your B/Braun pump, plug the charger into the black socket on the front of the pump. A yellow light should appear on the pump indicating that it is charging. You should charge the pump for 24 hours prior to using it for the first time.

Remember to unplug the pump from the mains before using.

Once the pump is fully charged and unplugged from the mains, it is ready for use. In preparing for your rectal irrigation and before starting, you should:

- Ensure you have all the items that you may require during the irrigation process ready.
- Fill the pump's water tank with approximately one to one and a half litres of water. There are three lights on the front of the pump: red, yellow and green. If the water temperature is correct, the green light will show.
- Attach the clear plastic tube to the metal connection valve on top of the pump.
- Turn the round dial at the top of the pump to switch the pump on.
- Run the water through the tubing to ensure that there is no air in it.

When you are ready to start the irrigation process, you should think carefully about the positioning of both yourself and the pump:

- Place the pump in a safe place to avoid any spillages or accidents. It is best if the pump is placed in a higher position due to the natural gravitational force.
- Sit comfortably on the toilet and insert the cone into your rectum. You can control the water pressure by adjusting the round dial to a level that is comfortable for you. Your bowel should then be flushed out in two stages:
 - **Preliminary flushing** – When the water is running through the tube, carefully insert and remove the cone into your rectum a few times. This will flush out any stool from the lower part of the bowel. Approximately ½ litre of water should be used at this stage.
 - **Secondary flushing** – Again, place the cone connection into your rectum and leave it in place until all of the remaining water in the tank has gone. This second stage clears the rest of the bowel contents out.

After you have used the pump:

- You should clean and maintain the clear plastic tube by running a sterilising fluid through the pump and then rinsing it thoroughly with water.
- We recommend that you leave the pump connected to the mains when it is not in use, so that it can continue to charge.

What are the risks involved with rectal irrigation?

There are few risks associated with rectal irrigation, although some people report minor rectal bleeding and/or discomfort. There is also a possibility of rectal perforation (a hole in the bowel), although there are no reported cases of this having happened using the B/Braun irrigomatic pump.

It is recommended that you do not use rectal irrigation if you have:

- unexplained bleeding from the rectum
- rectal cancer
- diverticulosis (small pouches in the lining of the colon or large intestine that bulge outward through weak spots)
- colon/rectal strictures.

It is also not recommended if you have had:

- recent bowel surgery
- a spinal cord injury (unless the injury has been reviewed post-operatively and irrigation deemed suitable by your surgeon).
- difficulty understanding how to use the pump or physical difficulties that prevent you from using it .

It is recommended that you seek advice from a health professional if you are using rectal irrigation and:

- are pregnant or planning pregnancy
- have inflammatory bowel disease or active infection
- experience faecal impaction (where dried, hard stools collect in your rectum and anus) or diarrhoea of an unknown source
- are on long term steroids or blood thinning medication
- have congestive heart failure
- have had anal surgery or abdominal surgery within the last six months.

Giving my consent (permission)

The staff caring for you will need to ask your permission and ensure you are happy to carry out rectal irrigation at home. They will gain verbal consent that states that you have agreed to the treatment and that you understand the benefits, risks and alternatives. If there is anything you don't understand or if you need more time to think about it, please tell the staff caring for you.

Remember, it is your decision. You can change your mind at any time and your wishes will be respected at all times. If you would like to read our consent policy, please tell a member of staff.

What support will I get once I start using the irrigation pump?

If, following your assessment and examination, the use of rectal irrigation is suggested and you are happy to use it, the B/Braun irrimatic pump will be demonstrated to you. This demonstration will be carried out by one of the clinical nurse specialists/women's health physiotherapists, who have undergone special training in this area. You will then be followed up by telephone consultations and ongoing appointments.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about rectal irrigation, please contact your nurse specialist/physiotherapist at the pelvic floor unit on **020 7188 4191** (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm).

Useful sources of information

Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

t: 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

To make comments or raise concerns about the Trust's services, please contact PALS. Ask a member of staff to direct you to the PALS office or:

t: 020 7188 8801 at St Thomas' **t:** 020 7188 8803 at Guy's **e:** pals@gstt.nhs.uk

Language support services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch using the following contact details.

t: 020 7188 8815 **fax:** 020 7188 5953

NHS Choices

Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.

w: www.nhs.uk

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