

Using a phosphate enema - preparing for your flexible sigmoidoscopy

You have been given an appointment to have a flexible sigmoidoscopy. This is an examination of your bowel, where a flexible tube with a camera at the end is passed through your back passage (rectum) and up inside your bowel by a specially trained doctor or nurse.

You should have received the leaflet, 'Having a flexible sigmoidoscopy – examination of your large bowel', which explains the test in more detail. If you have not received a copy of this, please ask us for one.

This leaflet explains how to use a phosphate enema to prepare for your examination. Please read this leaflet carefully. If there is anything you do not understand or if you change your mind and would like to have this preparation at the hospital instead, please contact one of the nurses in the endoscopy unit. Contact details are at the end of the leaflet.

What is a phosphate enema?

An enema is fluid that is placed in your rectum to clear your bowel. The phosphate enema you have been given is a single-dose disposable enema that will clear out and clean the section of your bowel that will be examined during the test. You need to use this enema before you come for your examination, to make sure your endoscopist (the doctor or specialist nurse who will carry out your test) is able to see the walls of your bowel clearly.

Speak to a doctor or nurse in the unit before you use the enema if:

- you know that you have an inflammatory or ulcerative bowel condition
- your doctor has asked you to reduce your sodium (salt) intake
- you suffer from a heart condition, such as congestive cardiac failure (CCF)
- you are taking anti-platelet medication or anticoagulant medication to prevent the formation of blood clots (such as aspirin or clopidogrel, warfarin, rivaroxiban or dabigatran), sedatives, chronic pain medication, or medications for diabetes.

How to use a phosphate enema

The phosphate enema should only be given via your rectum (bottom). You will need to use the enema at least one hour before leaving home on the day of your examination.

Please follow the guidelines below: Before you use the enema you will need a:

- jug or bowl of warm tap water
- towel
- bed to lie down on.

When you are ready to give yourself the enema:

1. Put the unopened enema bottle/ pack into the jug of warm water for about five minutes. This will warm the enema to body temperature.
2. Spread the towel on the bed, where your bottom will be. Remove the enema bottle/pack from the jug of warm water. Remove the cap from the enema bottle/ pack.
3. Lie down on the bed on your left-hand side, with your knees up towards your chest.
4. Insert the full length of the nozzle carefully and gently into your bottom and squeeze the bottle until it is empty.
5. Once all the liquid has been inserted, continue to lie on your left-hand side. The enema should produce a rapid response. Try to hold the enema in for as long as you can – about 15 minutes – to empty your bowel completely. To take your mind off the enema, you may find it helpful to read or watch TV. When you can no longer hold the enema, and you have the urge to go to the toilet to open your bowels, get up slowly and walk to the toilet.
6. If you feel a little unsteady after the enema, make sure 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 to you, lie back down until the feeling passes and contact the Endoscopy Unit for advice.
7. Discard the used enema bottle/ pack in a plastic bag and place it in the bin.
8. Do not have anything to eat or drink until after your procedure.

If you do not have any bowel movements within an hour or if any significant bleeding occurs, contact the endoscopy unit for further advice.

You may wish to bring a dressing gown, slippers and something to read with you. Please do not bring any valuables with you as we cannot be responsible for them.

Giving my consent (permission)

We want to involve you in decisions about your care and treatment. If you decide to go ahead, you will be asked to sign a consent form. This states that you agree to have the treatment and you understand what it involves.

You should receive the leaflet, **Helping you decide: our consent policy**, which gives you more information. If you do not, please ask a member of staff caring for you for a copy.

Contact us

If you have any problems or concerns, please contact the **Endoscopy Unit** for advice:

020 7188 7188 ext 54059 for St Thomas' Hospital or
020 71887188 ext 53499 for Guy's Hospital.

Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm.

If you need to change or cancel your appointment please ring 02071888887.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets

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:

e: 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 111

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day. **t:** 111

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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Membership is free and it is completely up to you how much you get involved. To become a member of our Foundation Trust, you need to be 18 years of age or over, live in Lambeth, Southwark, Lewisham, Wandsworth or Westminster or have been a patient at either hospital in the last five years. To join:

t: 0848 143 4017 **e:** members@gstt.nhs.uk **w:** www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk

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