

Colostomy Irrigation

Information and advice for patients

Colorectal

What is colostomy irrigation?

Colostomy irrigation is where the bowel is washed out with water via a colostomy (stoma) on a regular basis. The water causes the muscles in the bowel to move and helps the bowel to empty.

What are the benefits of colostomy irrigation?

The benefit of irrigation is that it can give you control over your bowel function. It also reduces gas production, faecal odour and skin soreness and enables you to wear a smaller colostomy pouch.

What are the risks of colostomy irrigation?

There is a risk you may experience stomach pain when the water is going in. If this occurs, stop the water and massage your stomach.

You may also experience difficulty in inserting the cone into your stoma. To help with this, use some lubrication and try to relax.

A disadvantage of irrigation is that it can be time-consuming and perseverance is essential.

What are the risks of choosing not to irrigate?

There are no risks of choosing not to irrigate, but the disadvantage is that you will not experience the benefits irrigation can give.

Are there any alternatives?

The only alternative to irrigation is to manage your stoma/colostomy as it is.

Who is irrigation suitable for?

Colostomy irrigation is suitable for patients:

- who have a colostomy
- whose faeces are normally semi- formed or formed
- are able to fully understand the task of irrigation
- have adequate eye sight
- are physically able to perform irrigation
- have the motivation and perseverance to perform irrigation

Colostomy Irrigation

Information and advice for patients

Colorectal

When can irrigation start?

Bowel surgery is major surgery so it is important that you feel well and ready to begin irrigation before starting. Although there is no suggested time period, 2-3 months following surgery is the average time people will begin irrigation.

If you decide irrigation is the right choice for you, you will be taught how to irrigate by a colorectal nurse after your operation, when your bowel function has settled and wounds are healed.

How is irrigation performed?

The equipment you will need is:

- a water container
- tubing
- flow control / regulation clamp
- cone
- irrigation sleeve and pegs
- disposal bag
- dry wipes
- water

This is what you will need to do:

1. Connect the equipment together.
2. Fill the water container with lukewarm water – your nurse will tell you how much water to use.
3. Remove your stoma pouch and clean your stoma.
4. Place the water container above shoulder height and open the flow control clamp to allow water to flow into the tubing. This will remove any air in the tubing.
5. Close the flow control clamp.
6. Attach the irrigation sleeve to your stoma and place the end of this sleeve into the toilet.
7. Carefully insert the cone (connected to the tubing) into your stoma through the opening of the sleeve at the top.
8. Hold the cone in place with one hand and begin to open the flow control clamp with the other hand to allow the water to flow into your stoma over 12 - 15 minutes.
9. Close the clamp when the correct amount of water has entered your stoma.

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Colorectal

10. Remove the cone, roll up the sleeve over the stoma and secure it with pegs.
11. Allow 30 minutes to ensure your colon has emptied.
12. Roll out the sleeve and place the end of it into the toilet to empty.
13. Remove the sleeve and clean / dry your stoma, then apply your pouch.
14. Disconnect and clean the irrigation equipment.
15. Place the sleeve in the disposal bag and discard.

At first irrigation can take up to an hour to perform and should be done daily. Your nurse will then advise you how often you need to perform it.

Follow-up

You will have follow-up appointments in the stoma clinic so that your nurses can check that irrigation is working for you and discuss any problems. You can also contact the colorectal nursing service if you have any questions or concerns.

Contact details

For further information and advice on irrigation or if you are worried at all, please contact your colorectal nursing team on the telephone numbers provided below:

Sandwell Hospital

0121 507 3376

Monday – Friday, 8am – 4pm

City Hospital

0121 507 4418

Monday – Friday, 8am – 4pm

Further information

For more information about irrigation and living with a colostomy:

Colostomy Association

Helpline: 0800 328 4257

www.colostomyassociation.org.uk

For more information about our

hospitals and services please see our websites www.swbh.nhs.uk and www.swbhengage.com, or follow us on Twitter @SWBHnhs and Facebook www.facebook.com/SWBHnhs.

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Sources used for the information in this leaflet

- J. Burch 'Stoma Care', August 2008
- Colostomy Association, 'Managing your Colostomy: Irrigation', 2011
- Ostomy Lifestyle, 'Irrigation', 2007
- Gastrointestinal Nursing, Yvonne Perston, 'Ensuring effective technique in colostomy irrigation to improve quality of life', 1st May 2010
- Lippincott, Williams and Wilkins, 'Lippincott's Nursing Procedures', 5th edition, 2009

If you would like to suggest any amendments or improvements to this leaflet please contact the communications department on 0121 507 5420 or email: swb-tr.swbh-gm-patient-information@nhs.net



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