

Using a Phosphate Enema

Preparing for your operation or examination

What is a Phosphate Enema?

An enema is fluid that is placed in your rectum (bottom) to empty the lower part of your large bowel. You will need to give yourself an enema at home before you come in for your surgery or examination. This will enable the surgeon to have a clear view of the area they are operating on or examining. Usually all patients undergoing your type of surgery or examination have an enema. It is safe to use and experience from other hospitals indicates that most patients would like to use it in the comfort of their own home.

How do I prepare to use the enema?

Before you use the enema you will need a:

- Jug or bowl of warm tap water
- Towel
- Bed to lie on

Please make sure you can get to a toilet easily.

When do I use the 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 operation/examination.

When you are ready to use 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 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 as far as you can comfortably manage.
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, remove the nozzle and continue to lie on your left hand side. The enema should work quickly. Try to hold the enema in for as long as you can, probably about 15 minutes, to ensure you 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 in, 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 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.
7. Discard the used enema bottle/pack in a plastic bag and place it in the bin.

The enema will have worked in the first hour, so after this time you should have no problem in getting to the hospital. Please do not worry if the enema has not produced an effect. Your bowel may have been mostly empty before you used the enema.

If there is anything you do not understand about using the enema or feel that you will be unable to do this at home then please contact Pre-operative Assessment for advice:

01225 825651

Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust
Combe Park, Bath BA1 3NG
01225 428331 www.ruh.nhs.uk

Please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) if you require this leaflet in a different format, or would like to feedback your experience of the hospital. Email ruh-tr.pals@nhs.net or telephone 01225 825656 or 826319.