

Rectal Irrigation At Home

What is a rectal irrigation?

A rectal irrigation is done to remove stool and gas from the intestines.

- It may be done if your child's abdomen (stomach) gets swollen.
- It might also be done if your child has a hard time passing stool.

How is it done?

- A tube is put into the anus and rectum. Air and stool can then drain out.
- Normal saline solution is put into the rectum through the tube.
- The saline then drains.

Most often these steps are repeated several times.

Supplies needed

- Rectal tube. Your child's nurse will tell you the size of your child's tube.
- Water-soluble lubricant such as KY Jelly®.
- Normal saline solution*.
- 60cc syringe.
- 2 small tubs.
- Towel - for your child to lie on.

***Note** - You can make your own normal saline solution. Add 2 teaspoons of table salt to one quart of water.

ALERT - Never use tap water for irrigation. Always use normal saline solution.

This is important because normal saline solution contains salt. If the entire amount of saline solution does not drain out during the irrigation, it will not hurt your child. Tap water does not have salt. If the tap water does not drain out, it could be absorbed by your child's body. This could affect your child's normal blood salt (electrolyte) level.

Getting ready

1. Gather the supplies.
2. Tell your child what you are going to do.
3. Wash your hands.
4. Fill the 60 cc syringe with the normal saline solution.
5. Have your child lie on the towel - either on the floor or on a bed. Have your child lie on the left side.



Doing the rectal irrigation

1. Use the water-soluble lubricant to lubricate the tip of the rectal tube.
2. Put the rectal tube in gently and slowly. It may be helpful to have another person available to help distract your child while you put in the tube.
3. Stool may come out as you put in the tube. Let stool drain into the tub.
4. Connect the syringe to the rectal tube. Gently push down on the plunger of the syringe to instill the saline solution.
5. Pinch the tube to stop the flow of saline. Remove the syringe.
6. Let the stool and solution drain into the tub. Gently press on your child's abdomen while the stool is draining.
7. If stool has not drained, reattach the syringe. Pull back on the plunger to remove stool from the intestine.
8. When all the solution has been used and the irrigation is done remove the rectal tube.



After the rectal irrigation

1. Measure the amount of stool.
2. Clean your child's buttocks to remove any stool.
3. Praise your child for cooperating during the irrigation. For example, say: "You were very upset during the irrigation but you didn't kick your feet. That was really good."
4. Wash equipment with warm soapy water. You may reuse the equipment for the next rectal irrigation.

How often is it needed?

Your child's nurse will tell you how often the doctor has ordered the irrigations.

ALERT: Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if your child:

- Shows signs or symptoms of enterocolitis. This includes swollen stomach, rectal bleeding, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea.
- Does not tolerate or improve with rectal irrigation.
- Cannot be irrigated because you have a hard time doing the irrigation.
- Has special health care needs that were not covered by this information.

This teaching sheet is meant to help you care for your child. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.