

Bowel preparation in the hospital before surgery

What is bowel preparation?

Bowel preparation (“bowel prep”) is cleaning the intestines of stool (solid waste) and the bacteria normally found there. This is done to make the colon usable for surgery, and to prevent infection.

Can I be with my child during the procedure?

You are welcome to stay with your child during the whole bowel prep procedure.

What should we do before the procedure?

Read and discuss this information with your child. Explain how the bowel prep is done, especially what your child will see, hear, and feel. Answer as many questions as you can.

To help your child cope with the procedures, and to help pass the time, offer distractions. (See the education sheet “Pain in children and adolescents” or “Pain in infants.”) Child Life specialists are available to help prepare your child for the procedures, and to help with coping. Children may find it helpful to have a comfort item such as a favorite toy, blanket, or pacifier.

How is the bowel prep done?

To flush the stool from the bowel, a large amount of salt solution will be given for 6 hours or longer, depending on the amount of stool and the type of surgery. Every hour, patients need to drink a large amount quickly. This is hard to do, so often a nasogastric (“NG”) tube is put into the stomach through the nose to give the solution. An X-ray may be taken to make sure the NG tube is in the stomach.

Your child must not eat or drink anything else while the salt solution is being given. An IV will be started to help your child get enough fluids. IV antibiotics may also be given.

Often, the salt solution causes an upset stomach. If it does, medicines can be given.

After the salt solution is done, antibiotics will be given by mouth or through the NG to destroy the bacteria in the bowel. Then the NG will be removed.

A salt solution enema may also be given rectally. If your child has a stoma, the salt solution will be given into it instead.

What can I expect after the bowel prep?

Once the antibiotics are started, your child may have clear liquids, such as apple juice or Popsicles®.

Your child can do normal activities. Play helps children cope with the procedures.

An anesthesiologist will meet with you to discuss:

- anesthesia
- what time to stop eating and drinking before surgery
- pain management after surgery

What else do I need to know?

Blood and urine tests will also be done.

Remember, **do not** give your child anything to eat or drink while the salt solution is being given.

Questions?

This sheet is not specific to your child but provides general information. For questions about why your child needs this procedure, please ask your child's doctor. If you have questions about how to prepare your child or for more information, please call

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