

# Guidance for using an enema

## Information for patients

Enemas are safe and easy to use. You use them to clean the lower half of your large bowel (sigmoid colon) so we can get a clear view of the area when you have your flexible sigmoidoscopy.

Most people find it convenient to use the enema at home. If do not think you can do this yourself, please ring the Endoscopy Unit on 020 3299 4079 and we will arrange for you to come in earlier on the day of your test to have it here.

### How do I get ready to use the enema?

- Do not eat for at least 30 minutes before using the enema.
- Make sure you can get to a toilet easily.
- Find a comfortable place to lie down.
- Have a towel to lie on.
- Warm the enema in a bowl or sink of warm water.
- Read the instructions on the packet/tube carefully.
- Use the enema even if you have diarrhoea or have recently passed a bowel motion.

### When do I use the enema?

- Use it at least one hour before leaving home for your test.
- It will work after a few minutes but stay near a toilet for the next hour because you may need to open your bowels more than once.
- The effects of the enema will wear off after one hour at most.

### How do I use the enema?

1. Once you have warmed the enema in a bowl or sink of warm water, pull the lid off the nozzle. **Hold the bottle upright so the contents do not spill.**
2. The nozzle is already lubricated, but you can put on more lubricating jelly if you like.
3. Lie on your left hand side, on the towel, with your knees bent up toward your chest as far as comfortable.
4. Gently push the nozzle about 7cm (3in) into your anus.
5. Slowly squirt the contents in. Remove the nozzle once you have finished and stay lying down.
6. Try to hold the liquid in your bottom for as long as you can – five minutes, if possible.
7. Go to the toilet when you can no longer hold it and you really feel like emptying your bowels.
8. Stay near the toilet for the next hour.
9. Some people have stomach cramps for a short time after using the enema.
10. Occasionally, you can feel faint or dizzy. If this happens, lie down until you feel better

The enema will have worked in the first hour, so after this time you should have no problem getting to the hospital.

**If you would like the information in this leaflet in a different language or format, please contact PALS on 020 3299 3601.**

