

Patient information factsheet

Bowel preparation using Picolax (morning procedure)

Hampshire Bowel Cancer Screening Programmes

We have given you this factsheet to explain how to use Picolax bowel preparation before your colonoscopy or flexible sigmoidoscopy.

Please make sure you read this information and follow the instructions carefully before your procedure. If you do not follow these instructions, we may have to cancel your procedure.

Please ignore the 'How to take Picolax' section of the manufacturer's information leaflet that comes with the medication and only follow the instructions in this factsheet.

Why do I need to take the bowel preparation?

The bowel must be emptied of waste material to ensure the endoscopist can see clearly when you have your procedure. It is important that you follow the advice and preparation schedule correctly. If the bowel is not properly prepared, your procedure may be unsuccessful or we may have to cancel it.

What is Picolax?

Picolax is a laxative used to clear the bowel before your colonoscopy or flexible sigmoidoscopy. It comes as a powder that you mix with cool water. It is normal for the mixture to feel warm immediately after mixing.

What to expect

While you are taking Picolax you should expect frequent bowel actions and eventually diarrhoea. You need to be aware that you may experience urgency and you won't be able to control your bowel movements so may need additional protection.

It's also normal to have some cramping in your tummy. You can apply a barrier cream, such as Vaseline or Sudocrem, and use moist wipes gently after each bowel action to reduce any soreness which can develop around the anus.

You can help to reduce nausea and make Picolax more palatable by keeping the mixture cold, adding a little squash and drinking through a straw.

It's normal to feel some nausea, but if you start to vomit then please contact the endoscopy department (using the contact details on this factsheet).

Please make sure you are near a toilet once you have started taking your bowel preparation. If you are diabetic, please see our separate diabetes advice sheet.

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How to take Picolax (diet, drink and medications advice schedule)

Please follow the instructions below, starting seven days before your procedure. You may want to tick each step as you complete it. Make sure you finish all the Picolax even if your motions are already liquid and clear.

Day	Time	Diet, drink and medications schedule	Completed
Seven days before procedure		Stop taking all iron supplements, but continue other medications.	
Four days before procedure		Stop taking any constipating medicines, such as Lomotil, imodium (Loperamide) and codeine phosphate, but continue other medications.	
Two days before procedure		Stop eating items on the 'Foods to avoid' list (see next page), such as fruit, green vegetables, cereals, baked beans and brown bread. Choose foods from the 'Recommended foods' list only (see next page).	
One day before procedure	7 to 8am	Breakfast from the 'Recommended foods' list.	
	9am	Take the first Picolax sachet in one pint of water. Drink this over one hour.	
	Do not have any more food from now on. You may have clear fluids or strained soup only (see next page).		
	11am	Drink one pint of water over one to two hours.	
	2pm	Take the second Picolax sachet in one pint of water. Drink this over one hour.	
	4pm	Drink one pint of water over one to two hours.	
	8pm	Take the third Picolax sachet in one pint of water. Drink this over one hour.	
	9pm	Drink one pint of water over one to two hours.	
On the day of your procedure	Morning	In the morning, you can continue to sip on water and have just enough water to take any essential medications.	
	Stop ALL fluids two hours before your appointment.		

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Foods to avoid

From two days before your procedure, avoid:

- tough, fibrous meat, hamburgers, beef burgers, sausages and faggots
- sausage rolls, pasties, pies and pastries
- whole fruit and muesli yoghurts
- jacket potatoes, specifically the skin
- all green vegetables, and all vegetables not mentioned on the 'Recommended foods' list
- baked beans
- thick vegetable soup
- tomatoes, corn or peas
- wholemeal, seeded or granary bread
- brown rice, wholemeal flour and whole wheat pasta
- high fibre crisp breads and biscuits such as digestives and 'Hob-nobs'
- cakes containing dried fruit, nuts or coconut
- all nuts and dried fruit, or anything else with pips
- peanut butter
- jam or marmalade with skin or pips
- all high fibre breakfast cereals, porridge and bran
- cheese, cottage cheese or cheese sauce
- butter, margarine, fats and oils
- all drinks containing milk

Recommended foods

From two days before your procedure, until the beginning of your bowel preparation, you can eat:

- tender, lean meat, such as poultry, ham, liver or kidney
- fish
- potatoes without skins, which can be boiled, mashed, roasted or chipped
- eggs
- well-cooked cauliflower florets (without stalks), carrots, turnip or swede
- consommé or strained soup
- clear jelly (not red) without fruit
- white bread, white rice and easy-cook pasta
- water biscuits, cream crackers and 'Rich Tea' biscuits
- plain sponge cake or plain scones without fruit
- jam and marmalade without skin or pips
- black tea or coffee, with or without sugar
- water, squash or fizzy drinks
- Rice Krispies

Clear fluids

Once your bowel preparation has started, you can have:

- water
- black tea or black coffee
- consommé
- clear or strained soup
- cola, lemonade or other fizzy drinks in small quantities
- strained, diluted, smooth fruit juices
- squash
- yeast or beef extract drinks, such as Bovril

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Getting here

Car parking spaces at Southampton General Hospital are limited during peak times so please allow extra time before your appointment. We recommend that you consider coming by public transport or taxi if you can.

Contact us

Hampshire Bowel Cancer Screening Programmes
Telephone: 023 8054 0067

If you are unable to attend your appointment please call the Hampshire Bowel Cancer Screening Programmes office on telephone 023 8054 0067 to rearrange your booking.

If you need a translation of this document, an interpreter or a version in large print, Braille or on audio tape, please telephone 023 8120 4688 for help.