

Patient information factsheet

St Mark's solution

We have given you this factsheet because your doctor or dietitian has advised you to have an electrolyte drink (a drink that contains water, salt and sugar to help you rehydrate) called St Mark's solution. It explains what St Mark's solution is, why you have been advised to have it and how to prepare it at home. We hope it will answer any questions you may have. If you have any further questions, please contact us using the details at the end of the factsheet.

What is St Mark's solution?

St Mark's solution is a potassium-free glucose electrolyte drink. It is used to replace fluid and electrolytes (natural substances found in the body which need to be kept in balance to maintain good health and include sodium, chloride and bicarbonate) that the body has lost.

Why have I been advised to have St Mark's solution?

Your doctor or dietitian has advised you to have St Mark's solution because your bowel is unable to absorb ordinary fluids well. This may be due to short bowel syndrome (a condition that develops when the small intestine is shortened or damaged and cannot absorb enough nutrients from the foods you eat to maintain health) or a high-output stoma (when your stoma output is 1500ml or more within a 24-hour period). Both conditions can lead to dehydration (when you don't have enough fluid in your body) and an electrolyte imbalance. St Mark's solution is the correct mix to improve your bowel's absorption of nutrients, fluid, and electrolytes.

How do I prepare St Mark's solution?

St Mark's solution must be freshly prepared every day using the method below.

Ingredients for a one litre batch

- 20g (6 teaspoons) glucose powder
- 3.5g (a level 5ml teaspoon) table salt (sodium chloride)
- 2.5g (a heaped 2.5ml teaspoon) sodium bicarbonate powder (bicarbonate of soda)

Please note that:

- glucose powder is **not** the same as sugar.
- St Mark's solution is not available as a prescription, but the glucose powder can be prescribed, if necessary.
- all the ingredients listed above can be bought from supermarkets or pharmacies for less than a single prescription charge.

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Method

1. Pour all the ingredients into 1 litre of cold tap water.
2. Stir well until all the powder has dissolved.
3. Sip the solution slowly throughout the day.

You should drink _____ ml of St Mark's solution per day.

How do I store St Mark's solution?

St Mark's solution can be stored at room temperature in a bottle with a lid or in the fridge. Discard any unused solution after 24 hours.

Fluid restriction

Your doctor or dietitian will also advise you to reduce the number of ordinary drinks you have, such as tea, coffee, water and juice, while you have St Mark's solution. This is because ordinary drinks do not contain enough electrolytes and having too many ordinary drinks can cause you to lose more water and salt, which will make you thirstier and more dehydrated.

Your doctor or dietitian has advised you to restrict your normal fluid intake to _____ ml per day. This fluid intake is **in addition** to the amount of St Mark's solution you need to drink each day.

What should I do if I experience dehydration?

If you experience any of the symptoms below and they are not usual for you, you may be dehydrated. Common signs of dehydration include:

- a dry mouth
- feeling more thirsty than usual
- feeling lightheaded or dizzy
- a headache
- passing less urine that is dark in colour
- muscle cramps

If you experience any of these symptoms for more than 48 hours, you should drink an additional 500ml of St Mark's solution, not more water. If your symptoms continue after this, contact your doctor or dietitian for advice.

Helpful tips

You may find it helpful to:

- measure the size of your glasses, mugs and cups so you know how much fluid you are drinking.
- write down what you drink each day, until you get a feel for the volumes.

The taste of St Mark's solution can be improved by:

- storing it in the fridge so it is cold.
- sipping it through a straw.
- adding a small amount of squash, fruit juice or cordial to the solution (please note that any additions must be added when you first make up the solution, not added to each glass you drink).

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Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us.

Nutrition and dietetic department

Telephone: **023 8120 6072** (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm)

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