

CONSTIPATION CLEAN-OUT

Chronic constipation means you have been constipated over and over or for a long time. This happens to people with certain illnesses and medicines. It also happens to people who do not have normal feelings in their colon or in people who are not able to pay attention to their urge to poop.

When you fill up with too much stool, your colon gets weak and stretched out of shape. The poop gets backed up and becomes hard and dry. The colon then gets stretched out and can't move the poop along well.

Impaction is the name for hard stools packed so tightly in the colon that normal pushing or straining doesn't get it out.

A constipation clean-out is the process of getting rid of most of the backed up stool. Once you are cleaned out, it will be easier to get to a better schedule of stooling.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Plan to do your cleanout on 2 or 3 days when you can stay close to the bathroom.
2. Take 1 capful of polyethylene glycol (Miralax) mixed in 8 ounces of a drink three times on day one, (in the morning, afternoon and evening).
Your doctor may tell you to use a different medicine or dose.
If you weigh less than 55 pounds or 25 kilos, take a capful twice a day.
3. You may need to repeat three doses again on day two. If you have already had a large amount of stool on day 1, then decrease to just a morning and afternoon dose on day 2.
4. You may continue to eat as you wish during cleanout days.
5. Start your regular dose of polyethylene glycol on day 3 or talk to your doctor about how to adjust your dose.
6. If you do not pass a large amount of stool by day three, let your doctor know.

If the medicine causes an upset stomach, or nausea or vomiting, slow down or stop. Call your doctor if you are having problems with the cleanout.



Using polyethylene glycol (Miralax)

Polyethylene glycol is one medicine used for constipation. You can buy it over the counter. It works by pulling moisture into your poop. It doesn't work right when you take it. The more you take, the softer the poop will become.

Use the measuring cap that comes with the powder to measure your dose. A full capful is 17 grams. Mix the powder in 4 to 8 ounces of liquid, unless your doctor tells you otherwise. You may mix the powder in any liquid such as water, flavored drinks, juice, coffee, or tea. Using a drink that has a strong taste can help hide any bitterness.

There is much less bitter taste if all the crystals are gone. Dissolve the powder in lukewarm liquid. Use 12-15 stirs to get all the crystals dissolved. You can chill it down after you dissolve it.

Side effects are very unusual. The only problem with taking too much powder is poop will get very loose or watery. Few people might be allergic and get a hive rash. Some people can feel cramping and bloating. If the drink causes gas or cramps, try to dissolve it in less sugary and non-fizzy drinks, like Crystal Lite instead of soda or Koolaid.

When treating constipation, the goal is to pass a soft and easy stool about every day or so. The Bristol Stool Chart shows that type 4 or 5 stools are easy to pass.








Type 1		Separate hard lumps, like nuts (hard to pass)
Type 2		Sausage shaped but lumpy
Type 3		Like a sausage but with cracks on the surface
Type 4		Like a sausage or snake, smooth and soft
Type 5		Soft blobs with clear cut edges (passed easily)
Type 6		Fluffy pieces with ragged edges, a mushy stool
Type 7		Watery, no solid pieces, entirely liquid

Image reproduced by kind permission of Dr K Heaton, Reader in Medicine, University of Bristol.

The Floppy Colon

If you have had constipation for a long time, your colon will be used to being floppy or over-stretched. After you do a clean out, your colon muscles will take some time to work better again.

The colon's job is to push poop along in a rhythmic way. When the colon is floppy and overstretched, it can't do that. It may take 2-3 months for the colon to get stronger again. We call this the "Floppy Colon" time period.

When you have a floppy colon, you need to pay careful attention to your stooling pattern. You don't want to get constipated again. You want to pass soft easy poop about every 1 or 2 days. You will need to adjust the dose of your polyethylene glycol (or other prescribed medicine) to keep you from filling back up again.

Pay attention to when you poop.

- If you are pooping too much or it is very liquid, then half your dose for the next day, or skip one day.
- If you are pooping too little, double your dose for the next day or increase to twice a day.

Chronic constipation needs a long term bowel management plan. Don't stop taking medicine during the Floppy Colon time period. Continue taking the powder at least twice a week. Call your doctor if you have questions.

To learn more watch the youtube video **"The Poo in You"**: Constipation and Encopresis Educational Video from Colorado Children's Hospital at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SgBj7Mc_4sc

