Picolax: Bowel Preparation for colonoscopy or sigmoidoscopy

For an Afternoon Appointment

Please read this patient information leaflet carefully at least ten days in advance of your colonoscopy or sigmoidoscopy

What is bowel preparation?

Bowel preparation is the term used to describe the use of medicines, known as laxatives, to clear the bowel, so we can achieve a thorough examination of your large bowel (colon).

Why do I need bowel preparation?

The bowel needs to be really clean to get an accurate diagnosis. Even small amounts of stool can hide abnormalities of the bowel wall. Sometimes, if the bowel preparation is inadequate, the examination (colonoscopy or sigmoidoscopy) may need to be rearranged for another occasion.

Which bowel preparation am I taking?

You have been prescribed **Picolax** (two sachets). Three days of changes to your diet are also essential before taking the Picolax, and your regular medications may be affected. You will need to purchase Senna tablets over the counter at a pharmacy or supermarket to take alongside Picolax. **Please buy Senna 7.5mg tablets and take two (15mg) before bed daily for 5 days before your colonoscopy.**

What to expect?

Picolax is a strong laxative and will cause frequent, watery bowel movements. It may take up to 3 hours to start working, so we recommend you stay close to a toilet.

Side effects

The following side effects can occur:

- Abdominal cramps and bloating
- Nausea, vomiting. If you vomit and cannot keep the preparation down, please contact the Endoscopy Unit for advice (number on the last page)
- Anal irritation (use of a topical barrier cream e.g. Sudocrem can be helpful)
- Headache and dizziness (these may occur due to dehydration; drinking water can help)

Serious reactions, such as an allergy to Picolax, are rare. Symptoms of an allergy include a rash, itching, wheezing, swelling of the face and / or difficulty breathing. If you experience any signs of an allergic reaction, seek urgent medical attention by calling **999**.

What about my other medications?

If you have **diabetes** which is controlled with insulin or tablets, please ensure you have received a diabetic information leaflet, and that the endoscopy team are aware. You can call 01225 821425 or

821788, on a Monday to Friday between 08.00 and 17.00, or discuss your diabetes at your pre-assessment appointment.

If you are taking **anti-platelet or anti-coagulation medication (blood thinners)**, please contact the endoscopy unit on 01225 821425 or 821788 or discuss this at your pre-assessment appointment. You may have already discussed them with the person arranging the colonoscopy.

If you take an oral contraceptive 'the pill', laxatives such as Picolax can stop it from working. Continue taking the pill but **use additional contraception for the remainder of your cycle** after taking Picolax.

For all other essential prescribed medications, you may take these with a little water. Avoid taking any medication **1 hour before or after** each dose of Picolax.

Once you receive your appointment

- Ensure you have the bowel preparation; this is often sent in the post if you didn't already collect it from the hospital e.g. at a clinic appointment.
- Ensure you have Senna available.
- Follow the information in this leaflet, rather than the leaflet in the medication box, as this achieves a better bowel preparation (a cleaner bowel).

7 days before your appointment

- If you are taking iron tablets, please stop these seven days before the examination. You can restart them afterwards.
- If you are taking medication to control diarrhoea, stop taking these until after the examination; common examples include Loperamide (also known as Imodium) or medication containing Codeine.
- There is no need to adjust other regular medications.
- If you take medications that cause constipation such as opiate analgesia (e.g. Codeine, Tramadol, Oxycodone or Morphine) or other pain management (such as Pregabalin, Amitriptyline or Gabapentin) regularly, please discuss this at the time of your pre-assessment appointment. You are likely to need additional bowel preparation, please take 7 days of Senna 15mg at night before the colonoscopy; Senna, also known as Senokot, can be bought over the counter without a prescription. If you are not passing stool easily each morning, you can take 30mg at night instead.

5 days before your appointment

- Take Senna 15mg (two 7.5mg tablets) before bed every day till your procedure

3 days before your appointment

- For 3 days before the colonoscopy, follow the dietary changes described in your colonoscopy booklet. It consists of foods that are easy to digest and avoids high fibre foods, leaving less residue in your bowel, so we can attain clearer views.

Please see the list of food allowed and to avoid in your Colonoscopy booklet.

2 days before your appointment

- Continue the low-fibre diet described in your colonoscopy booklet.
- Drink plenty of fluids throughout the day.

1 day before your appointment

- Have breakfast and lunch compatible with the colonoscopy booklet dietary advice.
- **After 4pm you can have NO MORE FOOD until after your examination.** You can continue to have clear fluids until 2 hours before your procedure the following day.
- **Clear fluids** include water or flavoured water, tea and coffee **without milk**, clear soup e.g. consommé, fruit juice without bits, squash (**not** red / purple), clear fizzy drinks e.g. lemonade, and Bovril or Oxo.
- Drink plenty of clear fluids between 4pm and 6pm.

DOSE 1 of PICOLAX at 6PM

At 6pm, take your first sachet of Picolax.

- Mix one sachet in glass of cold tap water (150ml).
- Stir for 2-3 minutes.
- Drink the solution over 20 minutes. If the solution becomes hot, wait until it cools sufficiently to drink.
- Aim to drink 250ml (one glass) of clear fluid every hour after taking Picolax to replace fluid lost through bowel movements, more if desired, until you go to bed.
- Drinking through a straw can be helpful.
- The addition of cordial to alter the flavour can be helpful, but please **avoid blackcurrant** cordial.
- You may begin to pass frequent loose motions; please stay near a toilet at this time.

Picolax will cause diarrhoea so stay close to a toilet. It can take up to 3 hours to work.

A barrier cream e.g. Sudocrem or petroleum jelly can help prevent soreness around the bottom.

Use moist wipes or toilet paper after opening your bowels to reduce skin irritation. ***Wet wipes must be disposed of in a bin, not put in the toilet.***

On the day of the colonoscopy

- **Before 6am** if you take regular medications, take them with a sip of water. Avoid taking medication within 1 hour of your Picolax dose.

DOSE 2 of PICOLAX at 7AM

At 7am, take your second sachet of Picolax.

- Mix one sachet in glass of cold tap water (150ml).
- Stir for 2-3 minutes.
- Drink the solution over 20 minutes. If the solution becomes hot, wait until it cools sufficiently to drink.
- Continue to drink 250ml (one glass) of clear fluid every hour while your bowels are still working, ideally until two hours before your appointment.
- Stay near a toilet.

- **You can have NO MORE FOOD until after your examination.**
- You can drink clear fluids until 2 hours before your appointment.
- **From 2 hours before your appointment DO NOT DRINK until after your examination.**
- **If you are also having Gastroscopy (Upper GI Endoscopy) at the same time, then DO NOT DRINK anything from 6 hours before your test.**

Your timetable at a glance

When	What to do
7 days before	Stop iron tablets and anti-diarrhoea medication, consider starting Senna if on constipating medication
5 days before	Start Senna 15mg before bed
3 days before	Start low-fibre diet
2 days before	Continue low-fibre diet. Drink plenty of fluids
1 day before	Low-fibre breakfast and lunch. No food after 4pm. Clear fluids only
6pm	Dose 1: one sachet of Picolax. Drink 250ml of clear fluid every hour
Day of procedure, 7am	Dose 2: one sachet of Picolax. Clear fluids until 2 hours before your appointment, then nothing to drink

Questions, concerns and queries

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Endoscopy Unit on 01225 821425 or 821788, on a Monday to Friday between 08.00 and 17.00.

Please contact the Patient Support and Complaints Team (PSCT) if you require this leaflet in a different format or would like to feedback your experience of the hospital. Email ruh-tr.psct@nhs.net or telephone 01225 825656.

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