

Antegrade Continence Enema (ACE) Flush

Common problems and solutions

ACE is a type of flush that uses salt water (saline) to cause a bowel movement. Fluid goes in through an opening (stoma) in the lower stomach. This flyer will help with problems that might happen during an ACE flush.

What is ACE?

If your child had an operation for ACE, they will have an opening (stoma) in their lower stomach. An ACE happens when you put a salt water solution (saline) and/or a soap stimulant, such as glycerin, into the stoma. Flushing the bowels in this way causes a bowel movement.

See “Antegrade Continence Enema (ACE) Surgery” at seattlechildrens.org/pdf/PE207.pdf for steps on how to flush your child’s bowels.

Common problems and tips to solve them

Try the tips listed below if your child has any problems with their ACE.

It may take a few months after the ACE surgery to find out what solution and schedule works best for your child. Your child’s ACE program may need to change over time as they grow and develop.

Stenosis

Stenosis is the closing or tightening of the opening in your child’s stomach. You will know that stenosis is a problem if it is hard or painful to your child to put the catheter into your child’s stoma.

Things that might help:

- Put a catheter into the stoma, tape it in place, and leave it in all day, in between flushes.
 - Remember that the catheter must be put into the stoma every day, even if you do not flush your child’s bowels every day.
 - An ACE stopper may be available, ask your child’s healthcare provider how to buy this.
 - Keep the catheter or stopper in place between flushes for at least 6 months, up until a year after the surgery was performed. Some people feel comfortable keeping the ACE stopper in place longer than a year.
 - Call your child’s nurse if you cannot put the catheter or stopper into your child’s stoma.
-

To Learn More

- Reconstructive Pelvic Medicine
206-987-2509
- Ask your child’s healthcare provider
- seattlechildrens.org

Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask your nurse.
- From outside the hospital, call the toll-free Family Interpreting Line, 1-866-583-1527. Tell the interpreter the name or extension you need.

Nausea or throwing up

Your child might feel sick to their stomach or throw up after the ACE flush if the saline solution goes into your child's bowels too quickly.

Things that might help:

- Pre-hydrate by giving your child electrolyte fluid, such as Gatorade, 45 minutes to 1 hour before the flush.
- Give your child the solution more slowly.
- Wait a longer time after your child eats a meal to flush their bowels.
- Warm the saline solution to body temperature, about 99 degrees F (baby bottle temperature).

Pain

Your child might have a problem with pain:

- When you put the catheter in
- During bowel movements

Things that might help:

- If it hurts your child when you put the catheter in, try putting in a smaller catheter and leaving it in.
- Call your child's nurse if your child has pain with bowel movements.

Slow response time

Your child's bowel movement might take a long time after flushing their bowels.

Signs of this problem are:

- It always takes longer than 60 minutes from the time you flush your child's bowels until they have a bowel movement.
- Sometimes, but not always, it takes a longer time for your child to have a bowel movement after you flush their bowels.

Things that might help:

- Call your child's nurse if your child's bowel movements happen later than you expect. Your child's providers may be able to help you make changes.
- Have your child drink 8 glasses of liquid a day. Water is best, and at least 4 of the 8 glasses of liquid should be water.
- Do the ACE flush at the same time each day. After a meal is best.

The ACE flush does not make your child have a bowel movement

Bowel flushing might not work if:

- Your child is sick.
- They have changes in their daily routines.

Things that might help:

- Try giving a rectal enema to clear rectum. Ask your child's nurse about how to do this.
- Call your child's provider if you have flushed your child's bowels 2 times and they have not had a bowel movement yet. You will need to make an appointment.

Diarrhea

You might notice that diarrhea is a problem if your child is:

- Sick
- Constipated, and having soft stool come from behind hard stool
- Taking medicines that can cause diarrhea (like antibiotics)
- Eating different things than they usually do
- Having changes in daily routines

Things that might help:

- Give your child soluble fiber such as Benefiber, Citrucel and Pectin if recommended by your child's healthcare provider.
- If your child seems to be sick, call their healthcare provider.

Leaking around the stoma

If the skin around your child's stoma is red and irritated it might be that:

- Your child is sick.
- There is a problem with the way the catheter is put in.
- There is a stool ball blocking the part where the catheter goes into the stoma.
- Your child may need an X-ray to check for constipation or blockage.

Things that might help:

- The catheter may not be in far enough. Try putting it in a little deeper.
- Check with your child's healthcare provider. There may be problems with the ACE that need to be fixed.

Accidents or leaking from rectum

Rectal leaking can happen if:

- Your child is sick.
- Your child is constipated and has soft stool leaking around hard stool.
- Your child is taking antibiotics.

Things that might help:

- Before giving the basic flush solution through the ACE stoma, give your child a rectal enema with saline. Make sure it is phosphate-free.
- Increase the amount of fiber your child is eating.
- If leaking is still a problem after 5 to 7 days, please call your child's doctor or nurse. Your child might have a bowel blockage, and you may need to bring your child in for an X-ray of their stomach.

Cramps

Your child might have different kinds of pain or cramps in their stomach or bowels.

Here are some of the kinds of cramps that might be a problem:

- Your child feels pain when you put in the catheter or fluid.
- Your child might have more or worse cramps than usual.

Things that might help:

- Warming the solution to body temperature, 99 degrees F (baby bottle temperature).
- Giving the flush after or during a bath or shower when the child is warm and relaxed.
- Try giving your child the solution more slowly.
- The problem may go away as your child's bowels get used to working better and more quickly.
- Call your child's healthcare provider if the pain or cramps do not go away.