

# Bowel Preparation for Surgery

**Bowel preparation (“bowel prep”)** means cleaning poop and mucous from the intestines. This is done to get the bowel ready for surgery. Bowel prep helps to decrease the chances of other medical problems, such as an infection. It also helps your child heal faster after surgery.

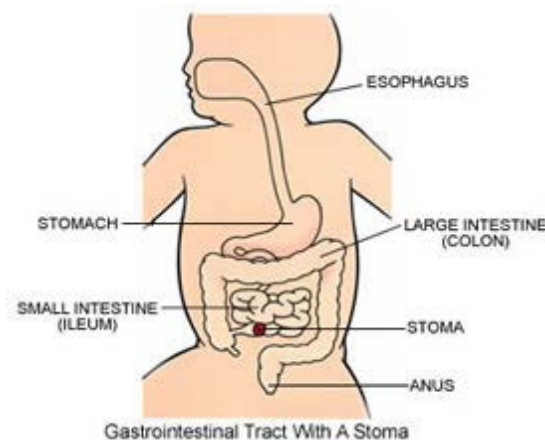
It may be uncomfortable for your child. Symptoms he or she may have are:

- o nausea
- o vomiting
- o abdominal fullness
- o cramps
- o frequent, large and watery stools

Bowel prep may take longer if your child has health conditions. Your child may also need to be admitted to the hospital for monitoring and to receive IV fluids to prevent any complications associated with dehydration.

## There are many different ways to clean out the bowel before surgery.

1. Early prep is started 48 to 72 hours before surgery. This is usually done at home before your child comes to the hospital for surgery.
  - Your child may need to have enemas, take laxatives and/or drink only clear liquids.
  - **A clear liquid is almost anything that you can see through.** Examples of a clear liquid include water, fruit juices (apple juice), soft drinks (Sprite®), sports drinks (Gatorade®), tea, chicken broth, popsicles, and jell-o (not the ready-made kind but the jell-o made with hot water at home).
  - An enema involves putting fluid into your child’s anal opening, mucous fistula, or ostomy to help remove stool. Early preparation would usually be done at home as an outpatient.



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2. Another method might involve your child coming to the hospital one day before surgery.
  - During this time, a cleansing fluid will be given to your child. The amount of fluid your child gets will depend on his or her weight. This fluid is called Golytely® or Nulytely®. It has electrolytes in it that keep your child from getting dehydrated before surgery. It also helps to remove stool from the intestines. The fluid works well and quickly to clean out your child's intestines.
  - Sometimes children are unable to drink the large amount of fluid needed. Your child may have a nasogastric (NG) tube placed to get the fluid. A nasogastric tube is a small tube inserted through your child's nose into their stomach that allows us to give fluid directly into his or her stomach. **Note: See NG teaching tool.**
  - Your child will have an intravenous (IV) line to get IV fluids. This will keep your child from getting dehydrated.
  - Labs will be drawn before surgery.
  - Your child will begin stooling shortly after getting the cleansing fluid. The goal of the bowel prep is for the stool to become clear or watery. After the dose of fluid is given and the stool is clear, the bowel prep is nearly finished.
  - Your child may then have an enema to remove any leftover stool from the intestines.
  - Last, your child will get antibiotics. These antibiotics will be given through the NG, by mouth, and/or through the IV. This will help prevent infection after surgery.

## What You Can Do to Help:

- Ask your nurse if you have any questions or concerns about the procedure.
- Write down how much your child drinks (takes in) and how much he/she stools, urinates and/or vomits (puts out). Give this information to your child's nurse. This will help the nurses and doctors keep your child from getting dehydrated.
- Provide comfort and reassurance to your child.
- Tell your child's nurse if your child is having a lot of discomfort.

## For General Health Information and Resources:

Call or visit the [Family Resource Center](#), a health information library on the 3rd floor of the hospital. Call 314.454.2350, email at [frc@bjc.org](mailto:frc@bjc.org), or check out the FREE [St. Louis Children's Hospital Kid Care App](#).

